NATIONAL EVALUATION PROGRAM

PHASE I ASSESSMENT OF SHOPLIFTING AND EMPLOYEE THEFT PROGRAMS

Field Feasibility Assessment of New Measurement Strategies

Westinghouse Evaluation Institute

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
List of Tables		v
Abstract		vi
1. Introduction: The Purpose and Nature of Field Feasibility Research		1
	1.1 The General Approach to Measurement	2
2. Measuring Shoplifting and Apprehension Rates Through Field Observations and Staged Thefts		6
	2.1 Observations	6
	2.1.1 Training of Field Staff	7
	2.1.2 Implementation Procedures	9
	Location	10
	Observation Team Configuration	10
	Assignment Procedures	11
	Data Collection	13
	Discontinued Observations	14
	Elevators and Escalators	15
	Dressing Rooms	15
	2.1.3 Observation Results	16
	Detection Rates	18
	Shoplifting Rates	21
	Adjusted Shoplifting Rates	23
	2.2 Staged Shopliftings	25
	2.2.1 Procedures	26
	Training of Confederates	26
	Methodological Problems and Solutions	27
	2.2.2 Staged Shoplifting Results	29
	2.3 Summary and Conclusions	32
	Expense	33
	Implementation Problems	34
	Reliability	35
	Validity	35
	Suggestions for Future Research	36
	Summary	37
3. Utilization of Existing Records		39
	3.1 Introduction	39
	3.2 Results	39
	3.3 Summary and Conclusions	43

Page

4. Self-Report Measures for Students and Employees---------- 45
4.1 Student Shoplifting Questionnaire---------- 45
4.1.1 Procedures---------- 45
4.1.2 Results---------- 47
4.2 Employee Theft Questionnaire---------- 49
4.2.1 Procedures---------- 49
4.2.2 Results---------- 52
4.3 Summary and Conclusions---------- 54

5. Customer Interviews---------- 57
5.1 Procedures---------- 58
5.2 Results---------- 59
5.3 Summary and Conclusions---------- 60

6. Offender Process Tracing---------- 62
6.1 Procedures---------- 62
6.1.1 Interviews with Apprehended Shoplifters------- 63
6.1.2 Interviews with Admitted Shoplifters---------- 64
6.2 Results---------- 66
6.2.1 Results of Protocol Collection with Apprehended Shoplifters---------- 66
6.2.2 Results of Protocol Collection with Expert and Nonshoplifters---------- 68
6.3 Summary and Conclusions---------- 74
6.3.1 Interviews with Apprehended Shoplifters------- 74
6.3.2 Interviews with Experts and Nonshoplifters---- 74

7. Evaluation of Shoplifting Court---------- 76
7.1 Procedures---------- 76
7.2 Results: Questionnaire---------- 77
7.3 Results: Court Records---------- 80
7.4 Summary and Conclusions---------- 81

8. Summary---------- 83
8.1 Measuring the Shoplifter Rate---------- 84
8.2 Utilization of Existing Retail Records---------- 87
8.3 Shoplifting and Employee Theft Questionnaire--------- 88
8.4 Customer Interviews---------- 89
8.5 Offender Process Tracing---------- 90
8.6 Evaluation of Shoplifting Court---------- 91

Page

References---------- 92

Appendices
Appendix A: Field Staff Training Program---------- 94
Appendix B: Field Observer's Data Schedule---------- 99
Appendix C: Confederate Data Schedule----------102
Appendix D: List of Merchandise Shoplifted by the Confederates----------105
Appendix E: Student Shoplifting Questionnaire----------108
Appendix F: Employee Theft Questionnaire----------116
Appendix G: Customer Interview Questionnaire----------122
Appendix H: Shoplifting Court Questionnaire----------125

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
2-1	Detection Rates for known Shoplifting Incidents	20
2-2	Theft Status of Observed Shoppers	22
2-3	Shoplifting Rates Adjusted for Observer Unreliability	24
6-1	Shoplifting Statements by Condition	70
6-2	Perceptual, Motivational and Judgmental Statements About Shoplifting	71

ABSTRACT

The Phase I National Assessment of Shoplifting and Employee Theft Programs culminated in the development and feasibility assessment of various data collection methodologies intended for use in a Phase II assessment and/or future research projects in this topic area. This report describes the procedures used to develop and pilot-test these methodologies, as well as the results of these field feasibility tests.

The data sources and methodologies studied during the field feasibility assessment are:

- Observations of shoppers.
- Stagings of shoplifting incidents.
- Self-reports of shoplifting by students.
- Self-reports of employee theft by retail employees.
- Shopper interviews.
- Existing retail records.
- Offender process tracing.
- Shoplifting court evaluation interviews.

These methodologies and instruments were intended as tools for future research directed at (1) measuring the nature and extent of the theft problem (both shoplifting and employee theft) and/or (2) measuring the impact of antitheft strategies.

The results of the feasibility studies indicate that the proposed measurement strategies are generally feasible for future research, given some modifications. Measures and procedures were feasible in terms of the minimal implementation problems, relative cost, and the degree of

validity.

The procedures for observing shoppers and staging shopliftings were given special attention because of their potential for pinpointing the actual shoplifting rate in a given store and determining the characteristics and behavior patterns of shoplifters (as opposed to selective data based on apprehended shoplifters). These procedures were successfully implemented. For example, based on more than 200 observations in a major department store, it was estimated that approximately 7.8 percent of the customers entering the store shoplifted something during their visit. This methodology is potentially useful for all retailers concerned about shoplifting.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: THE PURPOSE AND NATURE OF FIELD FEASIBILITY RESEARCH

During the final months of this Phase I Assessment, the Westinghouse staff has focused on developing and testing the feasibility of data collection instruments and procedures intended for use in a Phase II assessment or other future research projects in this topic area. (See Rosenbaum et al., 1979, for a detailed discussion of the preliminary design plans). This preliminary work is very important given the pressing need for further research and evaluation in this topic area. Further research can be expected because of:

- The serious financial burden placed on American shoppers as a result of the theft problem.
- The widespread use of costly anti-theft strategies.
- The absence of reliable and valid data concerning either the nature of the theft problem or the effectiveness of antitheft strategies.

The absence of reliable and valid measurement instruments and methods is the major obstacle on the road to understanding the nature and extent of shoplifting and employee theft, as well as conducting meaningful evaluations of antitheft strategies. Retailers have made substantial investments of time and money in certain antitheft devices and activities, with the assumption that these approaches are cost-effective in combatting the theft problem. Unfortunately, there are presently very little evaluation data that speak to the effectiveness of the major antitheft strategies. Similarly, because of the paucity of good research, little is known about the theft problem, other than selective

information available from store apprehensions and inventory figures. Essentially, we have found that retail companies, in general, have neither the research/evaluation expertise nor the resources to adequately measure the theft problem or the impact of antitheft strategies.

Given this problem, we previously proposed that a Phase II assessment should seek to (1) assess the processes and impact of selected antitheft strategies, using sound evaluation designs and a new measurement approach, and (2) improve our understanding of the retail theft problem. The primary thrust of the feasibility work reported here was to develop and conduct a preliminary assessment of some new measurement strategies that would be useful for meeting both of the above objectives. The interrelationship of these objectives should be emphasized. Without better measures of the extent and nature of the theft problem, stores will have a limited ability to assess the impact of antitheft strategies. High quality measurement is essential for conducting a meaningful evaluation. Thus, improving the measurement of the theft problem is so important as a first step in this field that it was treated as the central focus of our feasibility work.

1.1 The General Approach to Measurement

We have considered several alternative approaches to collecting data about the nature and extent of shoplifting and employee theft, and each has its own drawbacks. In terms of sampling units, we have concluded that the best approach for conducting preliminary research in this area is an "intensive site-specific" strategy. This approach calls for feasibility tests at only one or two sites so that the development and refinement of measures and measurement procedures can occur under

relatively uniform conditions, allowing for monitoring and immediate feedback. In addition, this site-specific approach holds the potential for the convergence of multiple measures in a "closed system" so that the relative losses due to shoplifting, employee theft, and bookkeeping can be identified. However, this outcome will be possible only after reliable and valid measures have been developed in each area. Alternative approaches also have been considered. The possibility of developing national and regional estimates of the theft problem was seriously examined, but was dismissed for compelling reasons discussed in our Preliminary Design Report.

The development of measurement plans did not occur without consideration for the possible uses of the instruments and procedures. Whether the measures are used for research (e.g., What are the causes of retail theft?) or for evaluation purposes (e.g., Is closed-circuit television effective?), the most important variables in the measurement plan are the actual rates of shoplifting and employee theft among specific groups. Thus, various approaches to measureing both shoplifting and employee theft have been developed and tested a⌣ part of the field feasibility work. Determining the rate of shoplifting among customers in a given retail store was a primary objective of the field feasibility work. Although many of the data-collection feasibility tests were limited by OMB regulations, a rather extensive and rigorous test of our shoplifting measurement strategy was conducted. This measurement approach involved field observations of shoppers, staged shopliftings, and related activities. This report gives special attention to the results of these feasibility tests, as this measurement strategy may be very useful to

retailers throughout the country.

Although measures of shoplifting and employee theft behaviors were given special attention in the feasibility tests, other measures were also developed either to evaluate specific antitheft strategies or to better assess the nature of the theft problem. For example, a customer interview was designed as an evaluation tool for antitheft activities, while a procedure for eliciting self-reports from shoplifters was developed for both evaluation and research purposes. In addition, instruments were developed to obtain self-reports of shoplifting from students and self-reports of employee theft from retail employees. For evaluation purposes, an instrument was developed to assess a unique shoplifting court. Finally, existing retail records on shoplifting cases were reviewed and evaluated.

In Chapters 2 through 7 of this report, descriptions are provided of the procedures used to develop and pilot-test the instrumentation and field procedures considered important for future evaluation/research in this topic area. Furthermore, the results of the field feasibility tests are described and recommendations for future work are offered. Specifically, the following data sources and methodologies were studied during the field feasibility tests:

- Observations of shopper behavior.
- Stagings of shoplifting incidents.
- Self-reprots of shoplifting by students.
- Self-reports of employee theft by retail employees.
- Shopper interviews.
- Existing retail records.

- Offender process tracing data.
- Court-related data.

The basic question that was addressed in the field feasibility was whether or not the proposed measures and methodologies (listed above) are practical and useful for future evaluation/research. The feasibility of the measurement plans was assessed primarily in terms of various implementation problems. However, the factors of cost, reliability, and validity were also discussed whenever possible, to aid in the determination of feasibility. Because of the pioneering nature of several measurement plans, the feasibility results and recommendations reported here are especially important for future work on shoplifting and employee theft.

Chapter 2

MEASURING SHOPLIFTING AND APPREHENSION RATES THROUGH FIELD OBSERVATIONS AND STAGED THEFTS

2.1 Observations

Like all crime reduction programs, the primary goal of the various antishoplifting strategies is to reduce the number of criminal events occurring in a particular area (in this case, the area is defined as selected retail stores or departments). In order to assess such programs, an accurate measure of the target behaviors must be employed. That is, appropriate measures of the shoplifting rate must be developed. The deficiencies of inventory figures and apprehension records for this purpose were documented in the Final Report of this project (Bickman et al., 1979). In many ways, these conventional measures produce problems similar to those encountered in using reported crimes to assess community crime prevention programs. One of the principle objectives of the feasibility assessment was to determine the feasibility of using field observations to establish a shoplifting rate which would be independent of any given security program.

This phase of the feasibility assessment involved two principal components:

- The development and implementation of a brief training program for inexperienced observers.
- Small-scale implementation of the observations and an assessment of the feasibility in terms of field procedures and ability to identify criminal events.

This section (2.1) presents the details of this work. First, the training program will be presented and components discussed briefly. This

will be followed by a presentation of the field procedures. Finally, the results of the feasibility study will be summarized and assessed.

Before proceeding, a brief overview of the design for this phase of the research is in order. The general plan was to implement, on a small scale, a study that would both test the feasibility of implementing the field observation and assess the accuracy of these observations. This latter component of the study represented a significant advance over previous attempts in this area (cf. Astor, 1970). The basic design was to be a double blind experiment in which the observers were to be randomly assigned to regular customers and to confederates who would stage shoplifting while in the store. This double assignment was thought to be necessary to gauge both the shoplifting rate and assess the accuracy of the observation staff. The experiment was to be double blind in that neither the observer nor the confederate was to be aware of the other's presence. However, due to difficulties encountered early in the feasibility study, the double blind aspect of the design was not implemented as planned.

2.1.1 Training of Field Staff

The field staff for the observation feasibility study consisted of 32 advanced undergraduates enrolled in a research methodology class at Loyola University of Chicago. The students had substantial backgrounds in psychology and basic knowledge of research methodology. The staff was divided into 16 observation teams, each consisting of one female and one male partner, with two exceptions. (These two teams each contained two females.)

Formal training of the field staff was comprised of six hours of

intensive classroom presentations and two hours of simulated surveillance situations. The formal classroom phase of the training process was designed to expose the field staff to a variety of topics pertinent to the unobtrusive observation of subjects. Methods for remaining undetected while observing customer behavior were discussed, as were common shoplifting techniques. Methods of data collection and the need for objective observation of occurring phenomena were also key areas of presentation and discussion. The formal classroom sessions were the first step in preparing the field staff for this task. However, the formal training could not completely prepare the staff for operation at the retail site; it was also necessary to have the staff conduct observations in a field setting. (See Appendix A for a detailed outline of the training procedures.)

Before the field staff began actual observations, simulated surveillance exercises were conducted. These exercises were designed to familiarize the field staff with some of the problems of covert surveillance. Although the simulated exercises were not conducted in a setting identical to the store used in the implementation phase of the project, the debriefings which followed indicated that the exercises had succeeded in familiarizing the staff with the observational procedures.

As the study moved into the implementation stage, the formal instruction, while of great importance, did not provide the field staff with all of the skills necessary for the unobtrusive observation of subjects. The staff obviously needed the self-confidence and agility to function in a constantly changing situation that only experience could provide. As a result, their abilities to observe subjects while remaining undetected improved as the implementation phase of the study progressed. Although

the small sample size precludes conclusive estimates of this effect, a decrease in the number of "lost subjects" and reports of increased confidence on the part of the field staff tend to substantiate this observation.

In addition to the formal training, the field activities of the staff were monitored while conducting observations. This provided a source of continual feedback to the staff that was oriented toward solving tactical problems relative to specific observers. During the implementation of the feasibility study, one hour each week was also spent debriefing the field staff, discussing various problems, and formulating potential solutions to these complications. In total, the training process consisted of approximately 12 hours of formal and informal instruction.

The combination of specific instruction and weekly debriefings created a dynamic interplay between the field staff and the supervisory personnel that improved the implementation of the study. The feedback from observers assisted in tailoring and refining the procedural and tactical aspects of the study. As a result of this interaction, modifications were instituted which improved a number of aspects of the observational methodology.

2.1.2 Implementation Procedures

This section is a review and discussion of the implementation phase of the study. It does not, however, cover the details concerning the use of seeded confederate shoplifters. (That portion of the study is covered in Section 2.2.) The present section discusses the location and description of the implementation site and reviews the specific

methodological procedures, problems, and solutions.

Location. The implementation phase was conducted at a large department store in the business center of a major city. The store employs in excess of 1,800 sales and support personnel and has a security staff of 20. It has eight floors of merchandise in addition to a large basement area. The nine floors are serviced by nine entrances (eight of which are on the first floor, one in the basement). Movement between floors is facilitated by three banks of elevators, two sets of escalators, and stairs. The store also contains eight restaurants and cafeterias.

For the most part, the store employs open merchandising, which is facilitated by wide aisles. This arrangement made observing subjects somewhat easier since surveillance could be maintained from some distance. However, the store's size and layout often necessitated continual movement from department to department, which increased the probability of the subject identifying or becoming suspicious of the observers.

Knowledge of the study was limited to the store's security director and his two chief assistants. The reason for this was threefold. First, it allowed us to test the ability of the store's security staff to detect both the observers and the confederates. Second, it allowed us to test the ability of sales personnel to detect both observers and confederates. Third, a lack of knowledge on the part of the employees allowed us to test the impact of the study on the daily operations of the store.

Observation team configuration. Prior to training, the optimal size and/or make-up of the observation teams was researched. The

eventual decision was based on the recommendations of retail security experts, FBI agents, and preliminary field tests. Through this process, it was decided that observation teams consisting of two members, one female and one male, provided optimal surveillance potential with the fewest number of complications.

The team configuration was based on five primary considerations. First, by using 16 teams rather than fewer teams with more members, a substantial number of subjects could be followed in the limited time frame of the study. Second, two-member teams reduced coordination problems on the floor (hand signals and gestures could be used, rather than radios). Third, the male/female combination allowed access to every department and provided possible "covers" for the observers. Fourth, if a subject was in a department for a substantial length of time, the observers could trade off surveillance and thereby reduce the likelihood of detection. Fifth, the use of teams reduced anxiety on the part of the observers by supplying peer support. We maintain that the reduction in anxiety resulted in more alert observations and thus produced more reliable data.

During implementation, opportunities arose to use both single observers and observation teams of three and four members. The resulting feedback from the staff confirmed that two-person teams produced optimal surveillance.

Assignment procedures. Systematic sampling and assignment of shoppers to observation teams was essential for producing a representative sample of the shopper population. (In addition, assignment of confederate shoplifters to observation teams was also required.) Assignment of

shoppers to observation teams was accomplished by waiting for five minutes after the team returned to the designated entrance and then selecting the fifth person to enter the store. The subject was then followed until he or she exited the store.

During the course of the study, a rotational procedure was developed for canvassing the most highly trafficked entrances. Four entrances were found to have high traffic flow and thus were used for the feasibility study. The observation teams moved from door to door, in a clockwise fashion, and were assigned one subject from each door. This method reduced the frequency with which the observers were seen using a specific entrance and limited their repeated presence in specific departments.

In an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the field observations, the field observers were periodically assigned to confederates, rather than regular shoppers. The confederate's goal was to enter the store, perform a shoplifting, and remove the merchandise from the store. This necessitated the use of a third party, under the guise of the random assignment procedure, who coordinated and assigned the field staff to surveil the confederates.

Employing the above procedures, a total of 262 subjects were observed during this feasibility test. Of these, 235 were regular customers, while 27 were confederates employed by the project to test the surveillance capability of the observation staff and the detection abilities of store personnel. With some information yet to be collected, data on 223 of the regular customers and 24 of the confederates are ready for analysis. The results of these observations are reported in Section 2.1.3.

Characteristics of customers were observed during the four-week implementation period. The race and sex of individuals entering the store through the four major entrances were recorded. The sample was also taken in the same time frame that the observations were conducted.

This survey showed 26 percent of the shoppers to be male and 74 percent were female. These figures are roughly equivalent to those of the observed population, where 29 percent were male and 72 percent were found to be female (101 percent due to rounding error).

With regard to race, the observational data indicate that approximately 55 percent of those subjects followed were white, 40 percent were black, and five percent were of some other racial category. The sample of nonobserved subjects revealed 49 percent of shoppers to be white, 46 percent to be black, and five percent to be of other races.

The lack of variation in the two samples indicated that the randomly selected sample of observed subjects tended to be representative of those shoppers entering the store at the time the observations were conducted. The slight variance may be accounted for by the difference in sampling error.

Data collection. A number of possible data collection methods were explored prior to the implementation phase of the study. Possible options ranged from concealed taperecorders used to record detailed behaviors to notebooks and the recording of highly specific data points.

The format for data collection was developed and refined as the implementation progressed. Initially, the field staff used a limited set of data points as benchmarks for taking notes during surveillance. The notes were used to reconstruct the events under surveillance and provide

a narrative review of each subject. The same basic procedure was followed the second week. However, data points were added to the schedule and the narrative format was replaced by a detailed outline. These revisions reduced the informational content of the field notes to a pragmatic level. All required data points were covered.

Finally, a two-page schedule was developed which combined the outline format without foregoing the observer's detailed comments and impressions. The two-page schedule listed all data points and provided ample space for comments. These schedules were completed after every subject. This tended to reduce possible errors due to memory. Additionally, the revised schedules allowed for precise answers dictated by the outline format without completely shaping the data. (See Appendix B for sample outlines and revised schedules.)

Discontinued observations. Four conditions existed which necessitated procedural restrictions. In these four cases, the decision was made to discontinue observations if the subject:

- Remained in the store in excess of two hours.
- Was found to be an employee.
- Entered one of the formal restaurants.
- Entered one of the two small cafeterias and did not exit within 10 minutes.

These precedents were devised before the study was implemented and were based on pragmatic considerations.

In summary, a number of procedural and tactical aspects evolved and were refined as the study progressed. This was done in an attempt to tailor the design of the methodology to the reality of the site and to

cope with problems unforeseen in the developmental phase of the project. The result was the growth of practical and relatively successful field procedures.

Elevators and escalators. Both elevators and escalators presented situations where the subjects and observers had to be in close proximity to each other and where possible detection of the observers was increased.

Two procedures were developed to reduce these problems. First, on elevators, both observers entered the car with the subject. However, only one team member exited with the subject. The other member exited at the next floor and rendezvoused with the first teammate later. On escalators, one observer anticipated the subject's move and got on the escalator ahead of the subject. This enabled the advanced observer to stay ahead of the subject while the second observer followed. This procedure also reduced the likelihood of losing the subject by following too far behind.

Dressing rooms. A sizable number of thefts are believed to occur in department store dressing rooms. Because of this, it was necessary to devise a strategy whereby such thefts could be detected without actual observation of concealment. Similar to the role of a fitting room checker, the field staff was instructed to count and carefully observe the number of items the subject brought into the dressing room and to check the number again when the subject exited. If necessary, the observers were to check the dressing room after the subject left. Of the three staged shopliftings which were conducted in dressing rooms, the field staff was successful in identifying one incident. The 33

percent detection rate tends to indicate that the detection of dressing room thefts may pose a problem for the measurement design.

2.1.3 Observation Results

The results of this feasibility test of field observation are divided into three sections. The first discusses the general feasibility of conducting covert field observations on a large scale in a retail setting. The second discusses the sensitivity of the observers to shoplifting incidents. This involves a discussion of the "known events" staged by the confederates in terms of detection rates. The third section reviews the observation of store customers. Of primary importance is the observed shoplifting rate. Also presented in this section are several projected shoplifting rates which take into account the previously identified detection rates.

One of the primary criteria for the feasibility of these field observations concerned the staff's ability to carry out their duties unobtrusively. That is, they should not have attracted the attention of either the security staff, sales personnel, or most importantly, the customers being followed. In order to be successfully employed, this methodology would have to be conducted without the knowledge of any of these groups.

In many ways, the nature of this work provided ample opportunity for detection by the various groups. The field staff had virtually no prior experience in this type of field surveillance. As noted earlier, the training was minimal. The activity in the store was fairly intensive, with between eight and 12 persons in the store four hours per day, four days per week, for four weeks. In addition, it might be

anticipated that the young age of most team members (between 20 and 25) would make them prime targets of potential surveillance by store security. However, the teams were relatively successful in remaining undetected. The field staff was observed on several occasions by security, sales personnel, and customers, but their purpose was never discovered.

During the first week, many members of the field staff reported being detected by both shoppers and sales personnel. For example, one team reported that two sales clerks were "pointing at them and whispering." However, the lack of such reports and the increasing familiarity of the staff with techniques of covert surveillance in subsequent weeks, suggest that these reports may be attributed to the initial awkwardness and self-consciousness of the observation staff. These problems could have been avoided with more preliminary field experience.

The second case of detection occurred during the third week and involved a single surveillance team of two individuals. This team reported that while following a shopper, they noticed that they were being watched by several security personnel (identified by two-way radios) in their vicinity. The male member of this team was the object of security attention. While security observed him, the female member remained close enough to overhear their conversation. They knew he was working in a team but had misidentified the other member. In addition, they had no idea that he was following another shopper but rather, suspected him of being a shoplifter. Several store employees approached this observer during the incident to ask if they could help him, but he was neither stopped nor questioned by security.

The third incident occurred on the last day of observations. One very visible member of store security had been observed following the field supervisor occasionally during the last few days. On this final day, the supervisor smiled at this individual and was asked if he "had a minute." In the ensuing discussion, the member of security proceeded to tell the supervisor that he "knew" why he was there. He related that nothing happened in the store without his knowledge. He went on to say that he knew the supervisor was working with store security on internal investigations of sales personnel and that he was working with five other people. No mention of the staged shopliftings was made nor any suggestion that customers were being followed.

These incidents suggest that the field staff was not completely unobtrusive. However, their purpose in the store was never discovered. In addition, there was little evidence that their presence was known to the subjects being observed.

Detection rates. The major check on the effectiveness of the field observations involved the calculation of a "detection rate;" that is, an estimate of the proportion of actual shopliftings detected by the observers. In order to provide such an estimate, the observation teams were periodically assigned a confederate who would shoplift while in the store. This matching procedure was discussed above. By providing a pool of known events, and matching the observers' field notes with the confederates' reports, a detection rate could be established. Not only can this figure be employed to assess the accuracy of the observers but, given specific assumptions, it may be employed to "adjust" the

observed shoplifting rate for unreliability. This latter usage will be reported later.

Table 2-1 presents the results of this set of observations. The reports of the observers were categorized into four levels: (1) No report of theft; (2) possible incident (no hard evidence of theft but observers thought one might have taken place); (3) highly probably (absence of merchandise suggested theft, but act of concealment not witnessed); (4) certain of incident (observers witnessed concealment). These varying levels of certainty allow for the calculation of several detection rates which range in value. These can be seen in the right-hand column of Table 2-1. The most conservative estimate would involve only those incidents in which the observation team was "certain" an event occurred. At this level, the field staff detected only about 29 percent of these known incidents. Given the furtive nature of naturally occurring shopliftings, the second level, which also includes the "highly probable" category, might be considered the best estimate of the detection rate. When this category has been included, 46 percent of the known events were identified by the observers. Finally, a "least conservative" detection rate of 54 percent may be obtained if the incidents identified only as "possible" are also included.

The above figures suggest that the field staff was identifying something between 29 and 54 percent of all incidents which occurred in their presence. This low detection rate might be accounted for by three factors. First, the furtive nature of shoplifting incidents would suggest that detection will be considerably less than 100 percent. Second, the field staff received minimal training and was relatively

Table 2-1

Detection Rates for Known Shoplifting Incidents (N = 24)

Observers' Report	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Certain incident occurred	7	29.2	29.2
Highly probable incident occurred	4	16.7	45.9
Possible incident occurred	2	8.3	54.2
No report of theft	11	45.8	100.0

inexperienced. Third, the loss of the "blind" conditions meant that the confederates knew they were being followed. This could have produced more caution on their part than if they did not know they were being observed. (This third reason will be further discussed in Section 2.2 on staged shopliftings.)

Shoplifting rates. One of the principal goals of this phase of the feasibility study was to determine whether field observations were a viable methodology for assessing the magnitude of the shoplifting problem within a given store. One measure of this problem would be the shoplifting rate; that is, the proportion of people who shoplift during their visit to a given store. The field observations provide an estimate of this rate for the cooperating store.

Table 2-2 presents the estimated shoplifting rates for the limited number of observations made by the field staff. The small number of cases and resulting large standard errors of these estimates dictate that these figures be viewed with care. Given this caution, the "most conservative" estimate shows that around three percent of all shoppers were observed engaging in some form of shoplifting. If the "highly probable" and "possible categories are added, the resulting figures are 3.6 and 5.4 percent, respectively. Given the tentative nature of the "possible" category, it might be suggested that the 3.6 percent figure is the most reasonable observed rate. That is, the field staff identified, with some certainty, incidents of shoplifting in 3.6 percent of the customers followed.

In addition to noting the incidence of shoplifting, the observable

Table 2-2

Theft Status of Observed Shoppers (N = 223)

Observers' Report	Number of Customers	Percent of Customers	Cumulative Percent of Customers
Shoplifting certain	6	2.7	2.7
Shoplifting highly probable	2	0.9	3.6
Shoplifting possible	4	1.8	5.4
No theft suspected	211	94.6	100.0

characteristics of all subjects were recorded. These were used to contrast the identified shoplifters with the remainder of the sample. Salient characteristics included: Sex, race, estimated age, whether they were alone, and interaction with sales personnel. Of these five variables, only age differentiated the shoplifters from the other customers, with those under 40 being more likely to be observed shoplifting than those over that age.

Adjusted shoplifting rates. The above figures are somewhat clouded by the possibility that some incidents occurred undetected by the observation teams. As was demonstrated earlier, depending on the estimates, the field staff detected only between 30 and 54 percent of the "known incidents." The above figures can be employed to calculate an "adjusted shoplifting rate;" that is, an estimate which takes the unreliability of the observations under consideration.

Before proceeding, two cautions must be made about such projections. First, the detection rates which will be employed to adjust the observed shoplifting rates are based on a small number of cases. Statistically, this means that these estimates may be unstable. Second, in using the detection rate based on the known incidents to adjust the shoplifting rate, it must be assumed that the detection rate was similar for both groups. The accuracy of the resulting estimates are limited by the instability of the adjustment factor and, to an unknown degree, the applicability of that factor to the general population.

Given the above cautions, Table 2-3 presents these adjusted rates. These figures were obtained by adjusting the observed rates by the appropriate detection rate. For example, in the sample of "known

Table 2-3

Shoplifting Rates Adjusted for Observer Unreliability

Level of Certainty	Estimated Detection Rate[A]	Observed Shoplifting Rate[B]	Adjusted Shoplifting Rate[C]
Certain of Incident	29.2	2.7	9.2
"Certain" and Highly Probable	45.9	3.6	7.8
"Certain," Highly "Probable," and Possible	54.2	5.4	9.9

[A]From Table 2-1.

[B]From Table 2-2.

[C]Calculations performed before rounding.

events," the observers were "certain" of only 29.2 percent of these incidents. If this detection rate is applied to the observed shoppers, it may be assumed that the 2.7 percent observed shoplifting rate represents only 29.2 percent of the actual incidents taking place in the sample of shoppers. Adjusting for this level of unreliability indicates that the actual shoplifting rate based only on the cases identified as "certain" may have been as high as 9.2 percent. Similarly, if those cases identified as "highly probable" are included, the adjusted shoplifting rate would be 7.8 percent. As was discussed above, this figure represents what may be termed the most reasonable estimate. That is, given the appropriate level of caution, it may be estimated that approximately 7.8 percent of the customers entering the store shoplifted during their visit. Finally, if the most tenuous identifications, the "possibles," are included, the adjusted shoplifting rate would be 9.9 percent.

2.2 Staged Shopliftings

For evaluative purposes, in previous reports we stressed the importance of developing new methodologies for determining both the shoplifting rate and the apprehension rate for given security strategies. In the previous section, we described the results of our feasibility test of employing field observations to determine the shoplifting rate. In this section, we discuss the feasibility of staging "known incidents" to assess the apprehension capability of security programs. Since the determination of such a rate assumes knowledge of the total number of incidents, it was previously argued that staging incidents may be the only feasible approach to establishing such a figure. Thus, in addition to the use of these incidents as a means of assessing the accuracy

of the field observation teams, they also were to be employed as a test of the detection and apprehension capability of store personnel. As with the observations, only the Director of Security and two of his assistants were aware of these activities. The remainder of this section discusses our limited application of this methodology to establish an apprehension rate.

2.2.1 Procedures

Training of confederates. The confederates received no formal instruction concerning methods of shoplifting. This was done in an attempt to avoid undue sophistication and shaping of the confederate's behaviors. As a result, each confederate was forced to develop their own technique or to rely on past experience.

The confederates exhibited a range of shoplifting experience. Several had experience in shoplifting in the past. However, for the most part, the confederates were naive. Despite the naivete, different levels of aggressive behavior and risk-taking tendencies resulted in a mixture of shoplifting styles and techniques.

The confederates were instructed to enter the building by a designated entrance at a specified time and to spend 20 to 30 minutes in the store. Both time and place of entrance were arranged through communications by way of two-way radios. When the confederates entered the building, a team of observers was assigned to surveil them. (This assignment was identical to that employed to assign the field staff to "real" shoppers. This was also employed to conceal the identity of the confederates.) While the confederates were in the store, they performed a shoplifting, then returned to the entrance, waited several minutes

outside, and then re-entered the store to return the merchandise to a predesignated office.[1] The merchandise was tagged and inventoried. The confederates then completed a data schedule similar in design to those used by the observation teams.

Methodological problems and solutions. The complications encountered in the implementation of the confederate shoplifting portions of the feasibility study were considerably fewer in number than in the case of the observational portion. In actuality, this procedure involved only two noteworthy complications: (1) Corrdinating the assignment of observation teams to confederates, and (2) procedures to follow in the event of apprehension by store personnel.

The most problematic aspect of this activity was the assignment of observation teams to surveil confederates. The original design called for the use of a double blind experiment. In this design, the confederates would be unaware that they were being observed by the field staff and the field staff would have no knowledge of the confederates. Thus, the assignment process would have to be accomplished without alerting the observers to the presence of confederates.

The field staff had been informed of the use of confederate shoplifters by their teacher. As a result, the double blind aspect of the experiment could not be employed. Knowledge of the nature of the experiment also complicated the assignment process. It was necessary to have assignment to a confederate appear no different than random assignment to a "real shopper."

[1] In four cases during the first week of implementation, the confederates performed multiple shopliftings. Due to time constraints, a decision was made to employ a single shoplifting incident each time a confederate was used.

This problem was never totally or satisfactorily resolved. Thus, both the observers and confederate were aware of the nature of the experiment. The effects of this on the outcome are not fully identifiable, but two observed effects may be noted. First, knowledge of the confederates appeared to provide motivation for the observation team. It may be conjectured that this served to increase their "detection rate." Second, knowledge by the confederates that they were being followed negated any test of the obtrusiveness of the observers and may have produced more conservative measures on the part of the confederates. This latter effect may have reduced the detection rate. Again, the extent to which these two effects counterbalanced each other is unknown.

In an effort to allow the confederates to enter the store at the close of the five-minute time period, two-way radios were employed. Their use allowed a field supervisor to inform the confederate of the proper time to enter the building and which door to enter through. This procedure resulted in marked success. However, an aura of suspicion existed among the field staff and over half of the confederates were actually identified as such by the observers throughout the study.

The identification of seeded shoplifters as confederates by the observers posed a significant problem. If identification of the confederates occurred before the shoplifting incident transpired, the field staff may have watched the confederate more closely in anticipation of the theft. As a result, the figure reflecting the identification rate for confederate shopliftings may be overstated. On the other hand, if the confederates were identified as being in our employ after the staged theft occurred, the identification rate of confederate shopliftings is

accurate.

The data provided by the observers does not allow for clarification of the identification problem. However, verbal and written feedback from the field staff tended to indicate that some identification process occurred as a result of the confederates' behavior both during and after the shoplifting incident. However, most of the informally discussed identification attempts were inaccurate. Identification prior to the staged theft was reported infrequently. This feedback suggests that the 54 percent detection rate for confederates is not an artifact of having identified the shoplifter as a confederate.

The possibility of confederates being apprehended by store security was a second problem that required attention. As stated earlier, a need existed to keep store personnel, specifically security operatives, from becoming aware of the nature of the study. This stipulation mandated that, should any of our confederates be apprehended by store security, they could not disclose the true nature of their activities in the store. This resulted in the application of the following procedure. Confederates were informed that, in case of apprehension, they were not to mention their involvement in the feasibility study to store security. If apprehended, they were to be processed and, as the result of prior arrangements with the store security manager, released. In this way, the integrity of the feasibility could be maintained.

2.2.2 Staged Shoplifting Results

Data concerning the known shoplifting events were recorded by the confederates. During the four-week implementation period, 10 confederates made 30 trips into the store and obtained 36 items of merchandise. This

section reports the results of these activities. First, the nature and value of the "stolen" items are presented. Next, these aggregate figures are compared to previous measures of shoplifted items. Finally, detection and apprehension by store employees are discussed.

A wide variety of items were obtained from most departments in the store. At one extreme, common items such as gloves, hats, letter openers, picture frames, statues, and a teddy bear were taken. Also collected were framed oil paintings, dresses, skirts, blouses, a crystal ball, and a backgammon set. At the other extreme, expensive items, including a gold trimmed carving of a bird, a portable black and white television, and an imported, handmade doll, were also taken during this phase of the study (see Appendix D).

In total, the obtained merchandise was vlaued at $1,178.67. The mean value of these items was $32.74. However, because the distribution was skewed by the inclusion of several very expensive items, the more appropriate median value was also calculated. For these incidents, the median was $16.00.

When compared to prior estimates of the average dollar loss attributable to shoplifting incidents, the above figures suggest that the merchandise taken as part of this project was more expensive than is generally the case. Reed (1977) estimated the average dollar value of shoplifted merchandise in retail outlets at $5.26, while Chelemsky, et al. (1978) arrived at an estimate of $4.00. Based on merchandise recovered in four department stores, such as the one studied here, Shave (1978) reports an average value of $22. However, because the above figure is based on merchandise recovered as part of apprehensions, it

may be an overestimate of the dollar value of shoplifted items. In addition, recent high rates of inflation may misrepresent comparisons between current and previous studies. When adjusted for the "cost of living index," the above figures range between $7.71 and $29.34. Finally, although the measure of central tendency employed by these other authors was not specified, the absence of an explanation would suggest that they employed the mean. Given this assumption, the merchandise taken by our confederates is considerably more expensive than that reported by Reed or Chelemsky, et al. and somewhat more expensive than that reported by Shave, even after his figure was adjusted for inflation.

While the principal goal of these staged incidents was to assess the detection rate of the field staff, an alternative goal was to employ such incidents to assess the apprehension rate within a given store. Unfortunately, apprehensions appear to be rare events in terms of the proportion of shopliftings resulting in detection and/or arrest. None of the 36 incidents of "theft" performed by the confederates resulted in even so much as a challenge by store personnel. (Nor were any of the six customers who were seen shoplifting ever approached by store security.) In order to accurately assess the apprehension rate, a significantly larger number of events would be necessary.

This lack of response on the part of store personnel was not due to any sophistication of methods. As was pointed out above, most of the confederates were novices. In addition, the flagrant and open nature of many of the incidents provided ample opportunity for detection. In one case, a television was taken from a display in full view of several sales associates, not concealed, and carried throughout six floors to

the exit. In another case, one of the confederates, with a backgammon set in his coat and under his arm, stopped to ask a member of the security staff several questions and remained undetected.

The use of confederates produced some interesting anecdotal information about other antitheft strategies used at the feasibility site. Two noteworthy incidents occurred which illustrate the vulnerability of electronic article surveillance systems. First, a confederate was able to learn from a sales person how to remove a sensormatic tag using a pair of pliers. The confederate was also shown how the tags are removed using the device provided by the sensor manufacturer and later noted that the absence of sales personnel allowed easy access to the tag-removing device.

Secondly, another confederate concealed merchandise which was tagged with a sensor. The confederate was successful in stealing tagged merchandise without any challenge from the personnel posted at the sensor detection terminals.

These two incidents tend to reflect the potential vulnerability of such electronic article surveillance systems. In the first case, the problem appeared to be one of human error. The same may be true of the second situation; however, the mechanical factor cannot be ruled out.

2.3 Summary and Conclusions

This section provides the general summary and conclusions concerning the feasibility of the observation and staging methodologies. The measurement plans were evaluated by applying a number of criteria, including expense, implementation problems, measurement reliability, and measurement validity. Each of these evaluation criteria is discussed in

turn and this section concludes with some suggestions for future research.

Expense. The expense inherent in the implementation of the measurement plan can be viewed both in terms of person-hours and an estimated dollar cost. Training time for each member of the field staff totalled 12 hours, while the observational phase accounted for an additional 15 hours per person for a total of 27 hours per person. The total person-hours, taking into consideration the 32 members of the field staff, is 864 hours.

An exemplary cost of implementation figure can be calculated. Although the field staff was not paid, comparable services could be retained for the price of $5 per hour. In these terms, the training of the field staff would have cost $60 per person, or a total of $1,920 for the entire observational staff. The observational phase would have cost $75 per person for a total of $2,400. Using the $5 per hour figure, the estimated total cost of training and implementation would be $4,320 or approximately $20 per subject followed. This, of course, does not include any overhead or indirect costs.

A possibly less expensive application of this methodology could utilize experienced security personnel as field staff. In such a situation, training would not be required and would account for a marked savings. Since the average rate for floor security personnel is approximately $4 per hour, the observational phase could be conducted at a substantially lower price. The measurement approach taken in this feasibility study was both labor and capital intensive. Application required a 32-member field staff and a total of 864 person-hours. The cost of implementation in terms of dollar value can be estimated at $4,300.

Even if, as suggested above, less expensive observers were used, the total monetary costs would be approximately $2,000 and would still require 480 person-hours. Although these figures reflect a substantial reduction in the total cost of application, this alternative staffing may reduce the reliability and validity of the data. This remains an empirical question.

In any event, the capital and labor intensive nature of this measurement plan tend to suggest certain limits to its application. In its present form, the design could best be used by retailers to provide a one-time estimate of the shoplifting and detection rates. It is also possible that, after future refinements in economies of scale, this methodology could be used every year to provide feedback concerning changes in shoplifting patterns. A complete cost-benefit analysis of the measurement plan is not possible at this time. Nonetheless, the data obtained from the implemented plan contain potential benefits in excess of accurately estimating the shoplifting rate. For example, further refinement of the design should produce data on the behaviors and physical characteristics of shoplifters. The benefits from such behavioral data could prove invaluable to retail security operations.

Implementation problems. A primary criterion for evaluating this measurement plan was the ability of the field staff to conduct unobtrusive observations. To be successfully implemented, the study had to be conducted without informing the security staff, sales personnel, and above all, the shoppers.

During the observational phase of the feasibility study, there were only three incidences where the observers reported any problems

maintaining a covert posture. These incidents appear to indicate that the observers were not completely unobtrusive. However, their purpose in the store was never discovered and there was no discernable interruption of store procedures. In addition, there was little evidence that their presence was known to the subjects being observed.

Reliability. Observational research is obviously subject to human error. Observer reliability can be demonstrated by showing that independent observers witness and record similar events or that one observer is consistent over time. The measurement design and the demand for unobtrusive observations precluded the use of completely independent observers in the implementation phase. However, the members of the observational teams often functioned as independent agents. The observational data collected and recorded was the result of a corroborative process between the two observation team members. When the conclusion was reached that a theft did or did not take place, it was not based on the judgment of a single observer. Rather, the conclusion was the product of two relatively independent observers. Few cases of disagreement came to our attention. Unfortunately, insufficient data were collected to compute reliability coefficients.

Validity. The final feasibility criterion was measurement validity. Validity issues were discussed throughout this chapter, but several basic points should be reiterated. The basic validity question is--to what extent did the observational measures of shoplifting behavior actually measure what it was supposed to measure? The staging of shoplifting incidents was utilized to provide a validity test of observers' judgments. That data show a maximum detection rate of 54 percent,

suggesting that an attempt be made to refine the observational approach prior to additional research. The upper limit on the validity of human surveillance under these conditions remains unknown.

A second validity question concerns the generalizability of the results. While the estimated shoplifting rate may be representative of shoplifting rates at other large department stores in the same metropolitan area, we would discourage anyone from making the assumption that these results apply to retail stores in general. New studies must be conducted to estimate shoplifting rates in other parts of the country and with other types of retail stores.

Other types of validity were discussed earlier, including statistical conclusion validity. In general, the number of shopper observations was sufficiently large to obtain relatively stable estimates, but the number of staged shopliftings should be larger to obtain a stable index of the accuracy of these estimates.

Suggestions for future research. Future applications of this observational methodology could possibly be improved by applying the following suggestions:

- Reduce the amount of formal classroom instruction in favor of more on-site training. Alternatively, experienced field staff members could be used.
- Maintain the double blind format for the pairing of confederates and observers. This may result in a more accurate detection rate.
- Separate the staged shopliftings into two sets. One set could be used for assessing the field staff's detection ability and the other set could be tailored to the demands of testing the security personnel. As a possible alternative, the two steps could be combined but a variety of merchandise should be shoplifted.

- Alternative surveillance techniques may be employed. For example, it may not be necessary for observers to stay as close to the shoppers as was the case in this study. Store security often follow subjects for a distance of 25 to 75 feet.
- The measurement plan should be implemented on a larger scale. Expanded implementation could allow for application in a variety of different retail locations. Such application would permit analysis of different security strategies across a range of geographic and socioeconomic locations. Full scale implementation would also allow evaluation of the design across a number of merchandising strategies, as well as a variety of merchandise.

In sum, the development and implementation of this new observational methodology must be considered a qualified success. Small-scale implementation has shown that the numerous tactical complications inherent in staging such a study can be successfully minimized. On the other hand, the low detection rate of staged shoplifting and the relatively small sample of confederates did not allow for any extensive assessment of the collected data. Some additional work is needed before the methodology can be conclusively described as feasible.

Summary. Establishing factually-based shoplifting and apprehension rates is a crucial first step toward defining the theft problem adn evaluating antitheft strategies. This chapter has described the development, implementation, and feasibility results for a measurement approach that can produce a solid estimate of the shoplifting rate among shoppers in a given store and should be able to identify the nature of shoplifters and their behavior patterns.

A brief training program was developed and implemented to instruct the field staff in methods of surveillance and observational data collection. The program consisted of lectures by experts in the field of retail security, covert surveillance, field observations, and research

methodology. In addition, simulations were conducted to provide the staff with surveillance experience.

A feasibility study of the measurement plan was conducted at a major retail institution in a large metropolitan area. As part of the feasibility tests, confederate shoplifters were employed to test detection rates among store security and trained observers.

The results tend to indicate that the general measurement approach is feasible for assessing the nature and extent of the shoplifting problem, as well as for evaluating antitheft strategies. However, certain qualifications must be kept in mind. Most notable of these is the labor and capital intensive nature of the design.

Chapter 3

UTILIZATION OF EXISTING RETAIL RECORDS

3.1 Introduction

For most retailers, the primary sources of data concerning losses due to theft are inventory and apprehension records. As part of this phase of the project, the feasibility of obtaining and analyzing these records was investigated. The purpose of such an exercise was to identify means of improving both the type of data recorded and the information obtained from the analysis of those data. The results of these efforts are reported below.

3.2 Results

In our attempt to obtain these data, we encountered two major problems. First, many companies consider inventory records and apprehension data to be proprietary information and will not release them for secondary analysis by outside agencies. Second, we found that most companies do not maintain apprehension data in a machine readable form (e.g., on Hollerith cards or magnetic tape). For many retailers, the apprehension record is used primarily for evidential purposes and not for research purposes. Practically, these realities meant that few companies were willing to share their data, and those who were willing often had only the raw incident reports or very broad summaries of the number of individuals apprehended.

After considerable effort, four companies agreed to provide data from their records. Two retailers released inventory loss figures (shrinkage) related to the installation of article surveillance

equipment. In addition, summary apprehension figures were obtained from a large grocery chain, while a private security firm provided standardized apprehension records from a large number of retail outlets. The results obtained from each of these data sources are discussed below.

The inventory shrinkage figures were obtained early enough to be presented in the Final Report of this project (Bickman, et al., 1979). Rather than repeat that analysis here, the present report will focus on the data characteristics and implications for future research employing such information. After considerable discussion, each company supplied inventory shrinkage figures related to the installation of article surveillance equipment. However, neither set of information provided data adequate for an assessment of the impact of their program. One firm supplied pretest data for a period of time before they installed the equipment and after the equipment was installed, but no data from comparable stores which could serve as control data were provided. The other organization provided data for similar stores where the equipment was installed but no data about losses before installation were provided. As was discussed in the final report, the many threats to the validity of the results issuing from such data preclude firm conclusions concerning the impact of these security programs.

Two observations may be made from the above data. First, in order to assess the impact of a new security program, retailers must adhere to accpeted principles of scientific experimentation. At a minimum, such principles could require data from periods before installation and some kind of comparison store data. Due to the realities of retail operations, the comparison and treatment groups probably cannot be

randomly assigned, but the pretest data would identify any existing differences. As mentioned above, each of the cooperating retailers provided part of such a design. However, in scientific terms, the obtained information could not provide conclusive results.

A second observation about the use of inventory shrinkage to measure program impact concerns the composite nature of such figures. Without knowing the proportion of shrinkage due to the various sources (shoplifting, employee theft, bookkeeping errors), expectations concerning the potential impact of a certain security program must remain unspecified. For example, if shoplifting accounted for only 25 percent of total shrinkage in a store with four percent shrinkage, then a totally effective antishoplifting program could reduce the shrinkage figure by only one percentage point, to three percent. In this sense, the effective use of such data must rely not only on better design, but also on more adequate means of assessing the magnitude of the component problems. One means of assessing the magnitude of shoplifting has been discussed in Chapter 2.

The second type of obtained data involved apprehension records. These were obtained from two sources: A retail grocery chain and a commercial security firm. The data obtained from the grocery chain were summary figures, by store, and included only the size of the store, the presence or absence of a security staff, the number of persons apprehended for shoplifting, and the dollar value of recovered merchandise. The reports containing specific information about individual incidents were not available. Thus, as provided, this information could supply little useful information for this project. In order to be more useful

for program development or resource allocation, the individual incident reports need to be coded and analyzed.

The commercial security firm did provide data for individual apprehensions. Information for these incident reports was recorded on standard report forms and recorded on magnetic tape. These forms contained very useful information including: Demographic characteristics of the suspect and details of the recovered merchandise. The data were from several different types of stores; unfortunately, "type of store" was not coded separately, and in order to protect its clients, the security firm deleted all identifying information. After careful consideration of the potential analyses which might be performed without considering types of stores separately, and prior information concerning the impact of this variable on important outcomes such as the decision to prosecute and dollar value of recovered merchandise, it was determined that the identification of type of store was critical to any analysis of these data. Thus, our efforts related to these data were limited to an examination of improvements which might be made in the type of data collected.

In general, it was our judgment that the addition of three variables could improve the data for evaluation and feedback to the retailers. The first addition would include a simple code identifying the type of store reporting the incident (e.g., grocery, drug, discount, department). At the present time, this information must be recovered from the individual store ID. As identified above, prior reports have shown that this variable is critical to several outcomes. Second, the codes for type of merchandise could be improved considerably. At the present time, they are geared toward grocery stores. As a result,

over 65 percent of the merchandise recovered in drug and discount stores is classified into the single category of "other nonfood." In order to be useful for these merchants, appropriate categories should be developed for the types of merchandise which they handle. Third, it would be useful for the retail merchant to have feedback concerning how the suspects were identified and apprehended.

In conclusion, the goal of this phase of the study was to establish the feasibility of obtaining and analyzing existing records concerning retail theft. In general, retailers are reluctant to release such information, but may be persuaded, given adequate guarantees by the researcher. Howeve, in order to obtain inventory figures which meet scientific standards, the researcher must work very closely with the retailer. Our experience has demonstrated that many retailers are eager to obtain high quality evaluation of their security programs, but often do not possess the expertise required for such work and would welcome the expertise and advice of reputable social scientists. Apprehension records are more available than inventory figures, but usually require considerable preparation and cleaning in order to be computer analyzed, and often do not contain the richness of detail which might be expected of such reports. These reports could be substantially improved with the addition of a few questions. A uniform retail apprehension form would be a major advance in this field.

3.3 Summary and Conclusions

The feasibility of employing existing retail records for social scientific purposes was examined. Inventory shrinkage figures were obtained from two retailers and were analyzed previously, but an incomplete

design and the composite nature of such figures precluded any firm conclusions about the impact of the selected programs. In addition, apprehension data were also obtained; however, one set of data contained only summary figures for four data points while crucial data had been deleted from the other. In general, these are problems which are typical of attempts to analyze existing data, but are magnified in this area. A useful approach to study of this topic would appear to be in the area of developing standardized means of collecting data which may serve both business and scientific needs. In this sense, retailers and social scientists must work closely to develop and improve both data and analytic techniques.

Chapter 4

SELF-REPORT MEASURES FOR STUDENTS AND EMPLOYEES

Given that most acts of shoplifting or employee theft are not observed by anyone other than the thief, self-reports of past theft behavior are especially important for measuring the nature and extent of the theft problem. In addition, self-report data should play a critical role in assessing the effectiveness of employee training, employee screening, and student education. In this section, we will describe two instruments--one designed to measure shoplifting behavior among high school students, and one designed to measure employee theft among retail employees.

4.1 Student Shoplifting Questionnaire

4.1.1 Procedures

Three sources of information were used to construct the student shoplifting questionnaire: (1) Existing quesionnaires, (2) psychological theories of social and criminal behavior, and (3) evaluable anti-theft strategies. First, existing questionnaires were reviewed and utilized where possible. A number of questions from an unpublished questionnaire (Weber-Kollman & Carroll, 1979) were incorporated into the shoplifting instrument found in Appendix E. Secondly, theories concerning how people make decisions (e.g. the decision to shoplift or not to shoplift) and deterence theories were used to guide the process of item development. Finally, this theoretical guidance was sometimes translated in terms of specific antitheft strategies that should be of interest in future evaluations.

A variety of questions were included in the student shoplifting questionnaire. Demographic data included the respondent's sex, racial-ethnic background, religion, age, education, and parents' occupations. To assess the magnitude and nature of the problem, a number of questions focused specifically on shoplifting behaviors, including the number of times they have shoplifted, the amount of time since their most recent shoplift, the number of items taken each time, the type of items, the average cost of the items, the type of stores involved, and the percentage of friends/classmates who shoplift. The temptation to steal was also measured (e.g. "While shopping, have you ever thought about taking an item without paying--but you did not take it?")

A number of questions were directed at the causal factors which are hypothesized to inhibit or facilitate shoplifting. A shoplifting questionnaire offers a good opportunity to explore some of these theory-based or security-based factors to a greater extent than demonstrated in previous research. Essentially, these questions tap the motives or reasons for either shoplifting or refraining from shoplifting. For example, 14 possible answers are available to the question, "Why did you decide not to take the item without paying?" "Why" questions were asked both in reference to oneself and people in general. Questions about causal factors also examined the respondent's thought processes during shopliftings, whether or not the shopliftings were premeditated (or the result of impulse), and the nature of any premeditated thefts.

Finally, some items were designed to measure the actual or perceived consequences of shoplifting in terms of being caught, being arrested, and the chances of more severe punishments. These questions

were asked in reference to oneself and friends/classmates.

As suggested by the above-mentioned items, a wealth of information can be requested from older students regarding the nature and extent of shoplifting. For this reason, the instrument was designed for high school students who were believed to be capable of providing clear information about the shoplifting problem and their own motives. More importantly, shoppers of high school age are suspected of being one of the largest shoplifting groups. Understanding their motives may have important implications for reducing the overall shoplifting problem.

The student shoplifting questionnaire was administered to nine high school students, ranging in age from 16 to 19. Seven males and two females completed the questionnaire. The instructions were as follows:

> This questionnaire is concerned with your experiences as a shopper in stores. Specifically, we are interested in what information people use in deciding whether or not to shoplift. Your responses are completely anonymous and cannot be used against you in any way. Do not put your name on this questionnaire. Please answer the questions as accurately as possible.

4.1.2 Results

The feasibility test of the student shoplifting questionnaire was very successful in terms of implementation. No student refused to fill out the questionnaire and all nine respondents answered almost all of the questions. There were no comments or notes suggesting any difficulty understanding or answering the questions. However, there were a few questions where problems were evident in the respondent's answer or failure to answer. Two respondents consistently failed to

answer a set of items asking them to return to the previous question and "mark a second X by those reasons that you consider to be very important." Their reason for failing to comply with this request are unknown. Perhaps the word "important" should be defined A second problem was evident in question #21, where 3 respondents checked more than one category when asked about the average cost of the items they had shoplifted. Perhaps this question should be reworded or the word "average" underlined.

In terms of expense, this questionnaire is no different from other questionnaires or surveys. In general, surveys are a relatively inexpensive method of data collection and they allow researchers to collect a wide variety of data on large numbers of respondents. This particular instrument is suitable for administration in a classroom setting. Thus, the student questionnaire is feasible on the cost dimension.

Given OMB regulations, the feasibility of the student shoplifting instrument could not be rigorously assessed in terms of reliability and validity. However we can speculate about certain aspects of validity given previous research and the responses to specific items on the present questionnaire. In general, self-report methodologies have been criticized because of their unknown or limited capacity to produce valid data. For example, respondents may not remember <u>how</u> they shoplifted or know <u>why</u> they shoplifted. Furthermore, they may give a biased or completely false response in order to provide a positive self-presentation and give socially desirable answers. The amount of bias and inaccuracy produced by the student shoplifting questionnaire remains

unknown. There was some evidence that certain questions were difficult to answer for a few respondents. For example, when asked, "About how many times have you shoplifted?" two students answered, "I'm not sure," and one answered "an awful lot." While most respondents had no problems answering these questions, the importance of them providing an estimated number of incidents should be emphasized.

Aside from the basic issues surrounding self-report questionnaires, several additional points can be made about the present instrument. First, we recommend that question 14 be expanded to include other types of merchandise that pertain to female shopliftings. In addition, the questionnaire could be expanded beyond cognitions, behaviors, and behavioral intentions to include more questions that deal with attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about shoplifting. Another possibility is to include questions about shoplifting in <u>specific</u> <u>stores</u> rather than shoplifting in general. This would help to identify stores that are easy targets of shoplifting.

4.2 <u>Employee Theft Questionnaire</u>

4.2.1 <u>Procedures</u>

The employee theft questionnaire developed by Clark, Hollinger, and their associates (Clark, et al., 1979) at the University of Minnesota was reviewed for its adequacy in measuring the nature and extent of employee theft. For several reasons, a decision was made to draft a <u>new</u> employee theft questionnaire. Although the Clark, et al. instrument covered a wide range of variables in the work setting, only a few items were direct measures of theft activity. Furthermore, almost all of the questions about employee behavior in the work

setting concerned negative behaviors and were worded in the negative form, thus introducing the possibility of response sets (e.g. uniform disagree with numerous items, social desirability responding, etc.)

In light of these issues, a new instrument was developed and pilot tested.[2] (See Appendix F.) This questionnaire contains a variety of questions about employee theft. Unlike the shoplifting instrument, this questionnaire focuses almost exclusively on the act of theft and does not explore the correlates of theft. (Shoplifting takes on fewer forms and is easier to measure using self-reports. Employee theft requires greater attention to the act itself). Certain items were created under the assumption that employee theft behaviors can be scaled as part of a unidimensional concept, with various levels of intensity. Thus, for example, the size of the theft was varied ($5 or less, $6 to $20, more than $20) for both taking merchandise and taking money from the cash register. Other theft items included giving merchandise to friends or family members, underringing for friends or family members, misuse of the discount privilege, damaging of merchandise for markdowns, overcharging customers, short-changing customers, underringing for the extra cash, and falsifying cash refunds. Respondents were also asked if they knew of any other employees who had taken merchandise or money from the store.

Respondents were also asked a number of nontheft questions about positive behaviors in the work setting (e.g. "Have you ever come to work when you felt ill and wanted to stay home?" "Have you ever

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[2]Dr. Marvina Rich should be thanked for assisting in the preparation of this employee theft questionnaire.

taken a short lunch to help out on a busy day?") These questions were inserted among the theft items and were consistent with the research rationale given to respondents--"The purpose of this research is to find out more about the ways that retail stores benefit from and lose from their employees. The assumption is that this approach would allow employees to tell "both sides of the story" and perhaps encourage more disclosure. In addition to removing some of the attention from the theft items, these positive items can also be treated as an attitude-toward-work index. One might expect an inverse relationship between positive and negative behaviors.

The cover sheet also sought to alleviate employees' concern about admitting to theft by telling them that: (1) the project was beind conducted by a private research firm rather than any particular retail store or organization, (2) employee theft is believed to be a very popular, widespread activity among employees (more than 50%), (3) the confidentiality of their answers is protected by law, and (4) any research project is useless if it contains false information.

Respondents answered a number of "Have you ever..." questions with a yes or no response and for each yes answer, were asked to estimate how many times they had engaged in that particular activity in the past year.

The employee theft questionnaire was administered to nine employees working at several different stores.

4.2.2 Results

The feasibility test results for the employee theft instrument were generally encouraging. No implementation problems were experienced. Our staff encountered no problems locating nine employees who were willing to complete the questionnaire. All respondents completed the questionnaire in the range of 12-15 minutes.

We should note that implementation on a large scale presents a totally different set of problems. For example, the basic question of cooperation from union and professional associations must be addressed. Several retailers whom we interviewed expressed concern about union opposition. Although Clark et al. (1979) found some opposition in the Minneapolis-St.Paul area, most unions and professional associations were cooperative. Another set of problems that is even more serious involves selecting representative samples and gaining the complete cooperation of those individuals who are selected. Large retailers sometimes do not have complete or updated mailing lists of their employees. Furthermore, obtaining a high return rate with a mail questionnaire, especially when it covers sensitive topics, is very difficult, indeed. Clark, et al. achieved a 51 percent return rate. While this return rate may be good, given the circumstances, the obvious question is to what extent the tendency to complete the questionnaire was affected by the tendency to engage in theft from the company?

Although the expense of this feasibility test was minimal at the implementation level, the actual costs of using this instrument would be similar to the cost of conducting any good mail survey with a reasonable

size sample. For example, pre- and post-survey correspondence with the potential respondents would be necessary to maximize the return rate. The Minnesota project is a good example of what this correspondence would entail. Undoubtedly, the cost increases substantially as the researcher seeks to improve the return rate and to maximize the fidelity of implementation.

In terms of reliability and validity, again, more extensive data collection would be necessary to evaluate the feasibility of the present employee theft questionnaire. A few specific problems were noted that may reflect on the validity of the responses. Several respondents answered "Yes" to a particular activity, but failed to indicate the number of times they had engaged in that activity in the last year. Because their answers were confidential, respondents could not be asked to explain this nonresponse tendency. More research is needed to determine the nature and importance of this problem. If this problem was an oversight due to weak instructions or questionnaire format, then the instructions should be improved or the format modified. However, perhaps these employees were willing to admit to theft, but chose not to reveal the number of times they had stolen from the company. A third possibility is that they were simply unable to remember the number of times. First, the extent of this nonresponse needs further explanation before the appropriate interpretation and solution is pursued.

The validity of self-reports about employee theft is a problem similar to the validity of shoplifting self-reports, as discussed earlier. At this point, suffice it to say that the validity problem may be more serious in the case of employee theft, where the consequences

of telling the truth could be perceived as greater (e.g., loss of one's job).

Several written comments by respondents suggest how the instrument could be modified. A few respondents indicated that certain questions did not apply to them (the instructions told them to mark "N/A" next to these items). At present, the instrument is dominated by questions about "taking merchandise" (which apply to almost everyone) and questions about taking cash or other forms of cash register theft (which apply only to those individuals who have access to cash). These two types of items were frequently included because they represent the primary areas of concern to retailers. However, other areas of employee theft should be considered (e.g., theft at shipping and receiving, stock areas, by support services, etc.). This instrument should be treated as a starting point. Further expansion and refinement should be pursued. Once a core set of items are identified for measuring the type and extent of employee theft, then questions concerning the hypothesized correlates of theft should be added.

4.3 Summary and Conclusions

Two self-report questionnaires were developed--one designed to measure shoplifting behavior among high school students and the other designed to measure theft behavior among retail employees. Each instrument was administered to nine respondents to test its feasibility for future research and evaluation. Overall, the feasibility tests suggest that the self-report instruments are workable and may be advantageous for future work if certain modifications are introduced.

The student shoplifting questionnaire was not only constructed to

measure a variety of shoplifting behaviors, but also to address a number of causal factors that may either facilitate or inhibit the act of shoplifting. Emphasis was given to students' thought processes as they affect the decision to shoplift or not. The feasibility results indicate that students had little difficulty understanding or answering the questions. Several recommendations were made concerning modifications in item wording, but no major revisions are considered necessary. To increase the instrument's sensitivity to the impact of antitheft strategies (e.g., media education), perhaps it should go beyond measuring thoughts, behaviors, and behavioral intentions to include more questions directed at attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge about shoplifting.

Both the shoplifting and employee theft instruments have relatively unknown reliability and validity. In general, we should be cautious of self-report data because respondents often misremember events, fail to know the real reasons for their behavior, and sometimes give biased or false answers to produce a positive, socially desirable self-presentation.

The employee theft questionnaire goes beyond previous research by offering a wider variety of theft questions including variations in the amount of theft, as well as variations in the type of thefts. Unlike the shoplifting instrument, the questions are restricted to measuring the extent and type of employee theft and do not extend into the hypothesized correlates of theft (with the exception of demographic data). The feasibility results were generally encouraging. Employee respondents were able to answer most questions without any difficulty. However, a few individuals failed to indicate the number of times they had engaged in certain activities in the past year. This potential problem requires

further exploration. In addition, because the questions about cash register thefts did not apply to respondents who did not have access to the cash register, perhaps the instrument could benefit from additional questions which focus on various types and/or locations of merchandise theft.

Finally, we should note that the employee theft questionnaire could be relatively expensive to administer and may face opposition from certain groups. For example, the procedures required to ensure a high return rate with a mail questionnaire and a representative sample can be costly. In addition, employee unions may be opposed to such investigations. Nonetheless, these obstacles are not insurmountable.

Chapter 5

CUSTOMER INTERVIEWS

Security strategies not only have a possible impact on the shoplifting rate, apprehension rate, and inventory shrinkage, but also on the general clientele of the store. Critical information in this area might concern the attitudes of customers, knowledge of the presence of security strategies, and preceptions of theft opportunities and risk of apprehension. Regardless of its effectiveness, a strategy that offends customers or violates their sense of privacy (e.g., searching all packages) may not be desirable from a public relations standpoint. Many strategies depend upon their visible presence as a deterrent, but if most customers do not recognize their presence, their effectiveness may be reduced. In order to better understand these issues, interviews were conducted with customers. Interviews were designed to determine the average shopper's preceptions of the:

- severity of the shoplifting problem in a particular store.
- extent to which shoplifters are apprehended.
- extent to which security procedures interfere with normal shopping behavior.
- effectiveness of store security.
- existence of various anti-shoplifting techniques of devices used by the store.

If properly conducted, these interviews could provide a richness of data that would be lacking in the numerical impact measures (e.g., shrinkage rate). The most useful of these data would concern perceptions

of attitudes about shoplifting and store security. Important perceptual data could be collected concerning the presence and nature of security devices and personnel, as well as estimates of the extent of theft opportunities and risk of apprehension. These data would be very useful in determining the visibility of security efforts. The meaning of this level of visibility would depend on the specific security strategy. However, for most strategies, a high level of visibility would be most desirable as a deterrent. Similarly, for most cases, success would be defined by a high perceived risk of apprehension, combined with low perceived opportunities for theft. These data could be validated against the shoplifting rate produced by the observations of customer behavior and the apprehension rates derived from the staged shoplifting incidents. If a close correspondence could be established, the role of these interviews in future evaluations might be greatly expanded.

Attitudinal data could also be collected during these interviews. Customers could be queried about their attitudes concerning store security and specific anti-theft strategies, as well as general attitudes about shoplifting and employee theft. These data would be useful primarily as a component in the overall evaluation of the anti-theft strategies. While store security is a necessity, it should not be established to the extent that customers are offended.

5.1 Procedures

Nine shoppers were randomly selected as they entered a major department store in downtown Chicago. All nine interviews were conducted between 10:15 and 11:40 am. Shoppers were stopped and asked the following:

> Excuse me, we are conducting a brief survey of shoppers. We feel it is important to get feedback from store customers about important aspects of store operations. I have just a few questions to ask you. It will take a few minutes.

The shoppers were then asked two questions, one concerning how often they shopped in the store and the other concerning how long they spend in the store when they shop. Respondents were then told the following:

> I'm going to ask you some questions which may require you to provide an answer from this card (hand shopper the card). This card illustrates the answers which range from "extremely" to "not at all." If you don't know, or can't give an answer, please tell me.

A decision was made to include a "don't know" category, rather than force subjects into providing a response to a question on which they had no knowledge. Respondents were then asked questions covering the points noted above. (The complete survey may be found in the appendix) Finally, subjects were asked whether or not they had any comments they would like to make concerning store security and were thanked for their cooperation. The interviewer, through observation, recorded the sex, race, and approximate age of the subject. The interviews took less than four minutes to complete.

5.2 Results

Nine interviews were conducted to stay within OMB regulations. Although no in-depth analysis of the data was feasible, certain points are worth noting. All nine interviews were successfully completed. No respondent broke off the interview. Thus, apparently these types of interviews are feasible. However, there were two problems associated with the interview.

First, some shoppers responded with, "don't know" to a number of questions. In particular, questions concerning how many people shoplift

and how many shoplifters get caught were responded to in that fashion. Since these questions are not critical to this interview, we suggest that they not be included in future work concerning shoppers' perceptions of security. Questions which would result in "don't know" answers should be kept to a minumum, not only because they produce limited information, but also because respondents tend to feel that they are ignorant or that the survey is of no interest to them.

The second problem concerned the possibility of respondents misinterpreting the interview and feeling that they are being accused of shoplifting. This possibility was recognized before the interview was conducted and it was hoped that this would be minimized by interviewing respondents as they entered the store, rather than as they left. Despite this precaution, the interviewer felt that some respondents were apparently confused and were taken aback by the shoplifting questions. One respondent acted as if she was being accused and went as far as to state that she did not steal. This confusion may be reduced or avoided by making the introduction more explicit.

Finally, the cost of conducting these interviews is small. A trained interviewer can conduct six to ten interviews an hour at a cost of $8 to $10 per hour. Data analysis would also be relatively inexpensive.

5.3 Summary and Conclusions

A brief interview was designed to assess shoppers' awareness of anti-shoplifting techniques and devices utilized in a retail store. In addition, an attempt was made to determine how easy shoppers thought it was to shoplift and how many shoplifters got caught. This pilot

interview was conducted with nine randomly selected respondents. The interviews were generally successful in that all respondents completed the interviews without breaking off. However, two problems were noted. First, too many of the questions resulted in the respondents answering "don't know," which appeared to lower their interest in the interview. Secondly, some respondents were concerned that the interviewer was accusing them of shoplifting. We see these as relatively minor problems which could be resolved in future interviews. We also conclude that shopper perceptions can be easily tapped in interviews like the one utilized.

Chapter 6

OFFENDER PROCESS TRACING

Psychologists using the information-processing approach to the study of human behavior (Newell & Simon, 1972) have developed a set of "process-tracing techniques" to monitor rapid mental processes. These techniques provide otherwise unavailable information about the ongoing perceptual and thought processes in decisionmaking and problem solving. They enable researchers to uncover how decisions are made, not just which factors are important in the decisions. The usefulness of these techniques is summarized in Payne, Braunstein, and Carroll (1978).

The best-known and most appropriate process-tracing technique for studying shoplifting is the collection of verbal protocols. These are collected by asking the subject to give continuous verbal reports, to "think aloud," while performing the task of interest. Verbal protocols have been collected (via tape recorder) in a wide variety of settings, including controlled laboratory studies of problem solving and decision-making (e.g., Newell & Simon, 1972; Payne, 1976; Svenson, 1974) and complex real-world decisions such as selecting stock portfolios, making psychiatric diagnoses, making parole decisions, and shopping for food (Braunstein & Coleman, 1967; Clarkson, 1962; Carroll & Payne, 1977; Payne & Ragsdale, 1978).

6.1 Procedures

The primary goal of the process-tracing procedures is to produce detailed information about shoplifters' thought processes during the

completed shoplifting act and during uncompleted shoplifting acts when shoplifting is considered but rejected. This information is not available using traditional interviewing techniques because recall of earlier thoughts is difficult or impossible after passage of time and removal of cues that triggered the previous thoughts. Interviews also have the problem of demand characteristics in that subjects may be unwilling to reveal certain motives and goals, although process-tracing procedures are not immune from these problems. (See Payne, et al., 1978 for a description of this procedure and its advantages and disadvantages, and Payne & Ragsdale, 1978 for an example using actual supermarket shoppers.)

The type of shoplifter thought processes of interest include assessments of the desirability of items, the ease or difficulty of shoplifting the items, and the risks associated with shoplifting, intrinsic motives for shoplifting such as anger about price or poor service, and reasons for not completing shoplifting acts. It is hoped that these data will reveal both perceptual processes--what the shoplifter notices about the items, layout, store personnel, antishoplifting devices--and judgmental processes--how various characteristics are weighed and evaluated.

6.1.1 Interviews with Apprehended Shoplifters

Interviewers waited in the store for shoplifters to be caught and processed by the store. When the store had finished conducting their interviews and paperwork, but prior to releasing or remanding into custody, the interviewer was introduced to the shoplifter. The interviewers told the shoplifters that they were doing research about shoplifting and were not connected with the store. The individual was free to choose to

participate or not. Participation would have no influence on any legal action taken by the store; participation would not help or hurt them in any way. Finally, they were promised confidentiality in that what they said would not be connected with their names and could not be used against them by the store or anyone else.

Subjects who agreed to participate signed a consent form acknowledging their understanding of and agreement with the foregoing conditions. They were then asked to retrace their steps through the store, beginning when they entered the store, to walk through and talk aloud regarding what they saw, thought about, and did. The interviewer tape-recorded these remarks and prompted the subject with neutral requests such as, "What did you do here," "What were you thinking about," "Where did you go next?"

This procedure parallels the "prompted protocols" technique of Russo and Dosher (1975). Although subjects do not give protocols during their actual in-store behavior, the recreation of their in-store activities, after a moderate delay, presents them with a rich field of cues that should both produce a high level of recall and recapitulate many of the same perceptual and judgmental processes.

6.1.2 Interviews with Admitted Shoplifters

Admitted shoplifters were identified using two procedures. As part of a study not conducted by Westinghouse, 150 questionnaires were circulated to undergraduate students in introductory psychology classes. The questionnaire was anonymous, and requested self-reports of shoplifting activity. At the end of the questionnaire was a request to assist our

research by participating in a pair of interviews at $5 per hour during which the subject would individually walk through a store with an interviewer and talk about what they saw and thought about. Both expert shoplifters (six or more admitted incidents in the past year) and non-shoplifters (no incidents in the past year) were solicited and asked to call the researcher and set up an appointment using a self-chosen code name for anonymity. The use of both expert and nonshoplifters served to provide a comparison group and to allow the interviewer to be blind to the shoplifting experience of the subject (both for methodological reasons and to further protect subjects). The second procedure for soliciting subjects was to tap our network of friends and acquaintances, seeking those willing to participate.

The procedure involved first giving subjects some practice in the "think aloud" procedure. Subjects were given a booklet of advertisements from a department store and asked to think aloud into a taperecorder as they examined the ads. They were asked to verbalize what they read, saw, and thought, and were prompted when appropriate. Following this practice session, the interviewer took the subject to a nearby shopping area of the subject's choice (one which the subjects actually shopped in). Subjects were instructed to go through the store as if it were an actual shopping trip but to talk aloud into the taperecorder as they did so. One-half the subjects were given additional instructions to formulate an intention to shoplift during their shopping trip. This was done to increase the amount of shoplifting thoughts. It also served to simulate situations in which shoplifting would be deliberately intended rather

than precipitated by being in the store. Again, the interviewer used neutral prompts where appropriate.

6.2 Results

6.2.1 Results of Protocol Collection with Apprehended Shoplifters

We had been informed by the store that they typically apprehended six to eight shoplifters each day. However, two interviewers spent two full days in the store, during which time only two shoplifters were apprehended. Inquiries revealed that during the period of this study, the rate of apprehension was very low, possibly due to a changeover in many of the floor security personnel. Because of the low rate, the study was discontinued as inefficient.

The two apprehended shoplifters were each approached and their cooperation solicited. One indicated that she would not participate because she had nothing to gain and was too upset (she was visibly upset, had been crying, and had been forcibly apprehended and handcuffed). The other agreed to cooperate, to retrace her behavior in the store, and to taperecord her thoughts. However, during a five-minute walk through a samll portion of the store, she proceeded to deny shoplifting, to justify her possession of goods, and to claim that she had been apprehended because she was known to the store personnel. Later discussion with store security indicated that she was not being truthful, but she maintained the same story in an attempt to avoid legal action. She may have believed that the interviewer was connected with the store, would tell the store what she said, or would believe her and even influence the store. Further, she was very inarticulate and difficult to understand.

Thus, the two days of data collection had yielded no usable data about shoplifters.

These results and experiences imply that the feasibility of this procedure is low. The data collection was relatively expensive since two full days of interviewer time were expended to contact two potential subjects, of whom one agreed to participate. This procedure could be made more efficient by obtaining the cooperation of several stores with one interviewer moving on call from store to store as shoplifters are apprehended. Even so, the proportion of subjects who agree to participate may be low.

There are some additional potentially serious implementation problems. While there was only a small effort required in allowing interviews, the store was concerned that the shoplifters would flee and detailed two security personnel to watch the interview from a distance. This is quite expensive in terms of personnel for the store, although such surveillance is neither necessary nor likely to stop an escape, and probably would have been dropped for subsequent subjects.

The store's concern for the security of the apprehended shoplifters could also be eliminated by interviewing individuals who have been released by the store and thus who will not be prosecuted. This sample of shoplifters is also more likely to cooperate with the procedure, once they agree to participate. The major drawback of this sampling technique is that it will produce a biased sample of less serious offenders.

An even more serious problem was the low validity of the data

obtained. The single subject interviewed lied about her shoplifting activities. Clearly, the situation of being caught for shoplifting and subject to legal action makes apprehended shoplifters want to get people on their side. We believe that the only feasible way to get truthful answers would be an iron-clad, believable guarantee of immunity from prosecution for this charge. Even if the store does drop charges in exchange for cooperation, it is uncertain how many subjects will provide responses that are both truthful and complete. Additionally, ethical problems arise if the store threatens prosecution to shoplifters that they would ordinarily release in an attempt to get subjects for the study. Even if valid answers could be obtained from subjects in this manner, the sample of apprehended shoplifters is a highly selective one. For each one caught, a very large number are undetected. For those caught, only a few will agree to be interviewed. Thus, generality is weak.

6.2.2 Results of Protocol Collection with Expert and Nonshoplifter

Two subjects (one expert and one nonshoplifter) were solicited through self-report questionnaires and two others through personal contacts. The experts admitted to large numbers of shoplifting experiences. These subjects were uniformly distributed between the "shop" and "shoplift" instructional conditions.

The actual protocols ranged in length from 17 minutes to 48 minutes, with an average of 30 minutes. There were no apparent differences in length across subject type or instructional set. The percentage of statements relevant to shoplifting was tallied for each protocol, and

these are presented in Table 6-1. Experts made more statements relevant to shoplifting than did nonshoplifters, and "shoplift" instructions produced more references to shoplifting than did "shop" instructions. The effect of instructions was particularly strong, although the small number of subjects makes all conclusions provisional. Also tabulated in Table 6-1 are the number of individual items considered by each subject as a target for shoplifting. The expert shoplifter in the "shoplift" condition considered 19 individual items, using about four statements per item. The expert in the "shop" condition considered one item using eight statements. The nonshoplifter in the "shoplift" condition considered one item using 104 statements, and this protocol revealed an agonizing moral dilemma and strategic impasse over taking a $7.95 book.

Statements relevant to shoplifting could be divided into perceptual, motivational, and judgmental categories and their subtypes. These are given in Table 6-2.

The number of statements was too few to attempt formal analyses. However, the most common events were quite different for experts and the nonshoplifter who considered taking a book. The experts were motivated by items they needed (had a use for) or were interested in. For example, one said, "Might be something there I could use because I don't really have very many tools." They examined the store layout, noticed any store personnel, and were concerned with item size. They mentioned tactics and judged items in terms of how easy they were to shoplift. The above shoplifter said, "Here's a six-inch adjustable wrench, um, fit into my pocket fairly easily."

Table 6-1

Shoplifting Statements by Condition

	Subject's Shoplifting History			
	Expert		Nonshoplifter	
Instructional Set	Shoplift	Shop	Shoplift	Shop
Number of subjects	1	1	1	1
Protocol length (statements)	165	492	365	292
Percent of protocol devoted to shoplifting	51	2	29	0
Number items considered to shoplift	19	1	1	0

Table 6-2

Perceptual, Motivational and Judgmental Statements About Shoplifters

	Number of Statements		
Statement Type	Experts	Nonshoplifters	Total
I. Perceptual			
Store personnel	7	0	7
Security devices	2	0	2
Store layout	11	0	11
People nearby	2	13	15
Size of item	9	2	11
Price of item	1	2	3
II. Motivational			
Interest/liking	11	0	11
Have a use/need	9	0	9
Price too high	1	2	3
III. Judgmental			
Takeable	21	0	21
Tactics	16	23	39
Risks	2	13	15
Justifications	0	10	10
Take/not-take	2	10	12

The nonshoplifter was motivated by a reaction to the price. She said, "7.95! I can't afford a $7.95 book; Wuthering Heights isn't worth $7.95. Golly, well, I could just take it." She primarily noticed people in general ("Too many people here; nobody can even swipe a decent book"), and thought about tactics, risks (embarrassment and conscience), justifications ("It's just one little book," "Think of it as borrowing," "These people make enough money"), and agonized over taking it or leaving. It is likely that in the absence of instructions to consider shoplifting, this subject would not think such thoughts. She says, "Oh, what am I going to do, oh, this is horrible." and "I don't know anything about these things, golly."

The pattern of events for the expert who considered a large number of items could be characterized in general with the following sequence:

- Check layout of store area.
- Look for items of interest or use to you.
- Evaluate ease of shoplifting (size, tactics).
- Check for store personnel.

The expert who examined one item followed a different sequence:

- Look for items of interest or use.
- Check fairness of price.
- Evaluate ease of shoplifting (size).
- Check for store personnel.

The nonshoplifter who considered one item went through this sequence:

- Look for items of interest or use.
- Check fairness of price.

- Figure out how to take it with no one seeing it.
- Worry about risks.
- Justify taking item.

The interview procedures with admitted shoplifters can be conducted at reasonable expense. Interviewers can be trained to collect protocols in a few hours at a cost of approximately $80. Each interview averages one hour and costs the following:

$ 5	Subject payment
15	Interviewer time
25	Transcription and analysis
$45	Total (without indirect or overhead expenses)

There are only minor problems in implementing the protocol procedure. The procedure is noticeable to other shoppers and store personnel, although small taperecorders make it reasonably discreet. However, we did not encounter any difficulties with any nearby people on our interviews.

The reliability and validity of the protocol data have not been formally computed. The procedure in general has been shown capable of being reliably coded into categories and producing valid data regarding mental processes (Ericcson & Simon, 1979; Payne, et al., 1978). Given the small number of protocols, only a single rater divided statements into a provisional coding scheme. It is usually possible to achieve high reliability for such codes (90-95% of agreement among raters). The validity of the protocols is also difficult to estimate. In reading sections where shoplifting was considered, there appeared to be a high degree of face validity. The factors mentioned in the protocols are consistent with what retail security experts consider important: High prices, easy opportunity, low risk, and a desire for the item (Feinberg,

1976; Kraut, 1976; Retail Week, 1978). Consistent with other studies of criminal deterrence, risk seems to be conceptualized as the chance of being observed by store personnel (probability of capture), rather than as potential penalties to be suffered.

6.3 Summary and Conclusions

6.3.1 Interviews with Apprehended Shoplifters

Apprehended shoplifters were requested to retrace their steps through the store and talk aloud about what they saw, thought about, and did. Because of low rates of apprehension, only two shoplifters were contacted in two days. One refused to cooperate and the other lied about her behavior in the store.

This approach would only be practical if a high rate of apprehension existed in a store or if several nearby stores were cooperating with an interviewer who could go wherever there were apprehensions. In addition, subjects will probably only cooperate if given some advantage as a result, such as a guarantee of no prosecution. This produces attendant ethical questions, but they are probably resolvable. There is no way to guarantee truthful reports in this situation, where the subject is concerned about the consequences of illegal acts. It may be impossible to get truthful reports except in unusual instances. In all, this method is difficult, time consuming, and unlikely to yield results worth the effort.

6.3.2 Interviews with Experts and Nonshoplifters

Expert shoplifters (self-report of six or more incidents in past year) and nonshoplifters were asked to walk through a store on a typical

shopping trip. One-half of each type were asked to formulate an intention to shoplift before entering the store.

Results proved an intriguing and promising look at shoplifting. Experts thought more about shoplifting than nonshoplifters, and "shoplift" instructions produced more thought about shoplifting than "shop" instructions. It is probably best to continue the shoplifting instructions since it greatly enhances the information produced, although evidence regarding validity should be gathered.

Statements about shoplifting suggest an orderly process of interest in an item, a decision for some persons but not others not to pay an unfair price, and evaluation of shoplifting strategies, a check on store personnel nearby, and a final decision to shoplift. Nonshoplifters seem to be motivated not to shoplift because they will be seen and embarrassed, and their socialization regarding moral beliefs about theft. Experienced shoplifters appear to be more strategic, with store personnel the most obvious deterrent, along with the ease of physically removing the item.

The insights illustrated in this pilot data strongly suggest that this method is feasible, and capable of producing new and useful data regarding shoplifter thoughts and behaviors. A study with a larger number of subjects, inclusion of a broad variety of shoplifters solicited in a variety of ways (including from the store files or court records), and a broad and systematic sample of stores would seem to be a worthwhile possibility for increasing our understanding of shoplifting and capacity to control it.

Chapter 7

EVALUATION OF SHOPLIFTING COURT

7.1 Procedures

Field feasibility test methodologies for the Phase II assessment of the Chicago Shoplifting Court included observations of court proceedings; interviews with retail security personnel, judges, and attorneys; and the testing of a court assessment questionnaire. The primary goals of the feasibility tests were:

- To develop a generic court assessment instrument and assess administration procedures.
- To assess the feasibility of obtaining further archival data on the courts.

Construction and testing of the generic court assessment instrument proceeded as follows. Information from our observations of courtroom proceedings, literature review, and interviews were used to construct a pilot survey instrument. The pilot instrument contained 28 items directed at the following areas:

- General perceptions of the operations and adequacy of the court system to deal with the shoplifting problem.
- Specific perceptions of the appropriate philosophical goals (i.e., punishment, rehabilitation, general deterrence), and dispositional goals (i.e., monetary fines, jail sentences, probation, conditional discharge) for the courts in dealing with shoplifting cases.
- Specific items addressing the shoplifting court's stated goals of increasing severity of penalties administered.
- Open-ended items eliciting suggestions for improvement of the survey instrument itself.
- Questions about the availability of court records.

After preliminary reviews of the instrument by Westinghouse staff, a final "Shoplifting Court Questionnaire" was constructed (see Appendix H). The instrument was designed to be administered by Westinghouse staff to subjects over the telephone and through in-person interviews. The final form of the instrument was administered to three retail security directors, one shoplifting court judge, and one state prosecuting attorney. The retail security directors were contacted by telephone; the judge and attorney were interviewed in-person.

7.2 Results: Questionnaire

The Shoplifting Court Questionnaire appears to be a feasible and practical instrument to implement in a Phase II evaluation of shoplifting court. Because the instrument has already been developed, the major expenses in a Phase II implementation would involve data collection and analysis.

Feasibility tests of the instrument suggest a need for flexibility and persistence in larger administrations. Elicitation of judicial cooperation, for example, appears to require a scheduled in-person interview. Security directors have inconsistent schedules and did not always return telephone calls. Overall, however, and in comparison with other methods for obtaining information on the courts (i.e., archival data), the questionnaire would be easier to implement and less costly.

The reliability and validity questions which arise concerning the instrument are the typical ones which arise when self-report instruments are used (recall, social desirability, etc.). The numeral estimates of, for example, court prosecution rates, may show high variability in responses due to lack of concrete information on the part of many respondents.

While the instrument would be of questionable validity for quantitative empirical analysis, it would be very appropriate for a phenomenological and perceptual evaluation of the court. Such an evaluation is likely to be more indicative of the true impact of the court system. Reliability and validity would be further enhanced by careful selection of respondents. Because security directors may not deal with the court on a consistent and regular basis, they may not have sufficient experience to give informed answers. Lower level security guards who regularly represent the company in court appear to be an important subject pool. Similarly, administration of the instrument (or a modified instrument) to defendants could provide crucial insights into the impact of the court on shoplifting.

Feasibility of the questionnaire suggest several specific recommendations for modification of the instrument and refinement of the administration procedures. Suggested modifications of the instrument are as follows:

- Items 7 and 8, which were intended to elicit dispositional goals for shoplifters (i.e., punishment, rehabilitation, general deterrence) should be eliminated or modified to include dispositional preferences for more specific offender categories (e.g., first offenders versus chronic offenders). Subjects had difficulty rating these goals similarly for all shoplifters.

- Questions 9-12, which asked subjects to compare shoplifting court to the regular court processing of shoplifting cases, are of marginal utility and could be dropped. Because shoplifting court has been in existence since 1974, most subjects did not have sufficient knowledge to answer the questions from personal experience. Only the judge we interviewed could make an informed answer to the statement.

- Questions 14-15, which asked retail security directors for specific information about prosecution rates, percentages of guilty verdicts, and apprehension rates, were either answered out of conjecture or not at all. Data to answer these questions is not easily accessible to security directors. Questionnaires mailed to these subjects, allowing more time for completion, would likely produce more valid information. Another method would be to ask for rough estimates. This source of error would lead to serious problems of validity and reliability.

- Questions 22 and 23, which asked subjects for suggestions of ways to improve prosecution rates and specific ways to improve shoplifting court, produced redundant information. The suggested modification would be to eliminate question 22.

Administration of the instruments in the feasibility testing leads to several suggestions for future administration. One primary issue concerns sampling of respondents. Retail security directors were not uniformly aware of shoplifting court, nor was detailed information about their court processing of shoplifting offenders readily available to them. Interviews with lower-level security personnel, who regularly attend court sessions, would likely produce more valid information. Second, an additional subject pool for further test questionnaires should include defendants in shoplifting cases. Interviews with a large number of defendants would facilitate greater understanding of the phenomenology and dynamics of court prosecution of shoplifting cases. The perspective of defendants would provide for more concrete assessment of the actual impact of court decisions.

Responses obtained in feasibility tests, although based on a very small sample, suggest that comparative assessment of the various subpopulations which deal with the court would provide insights as to how the courts operate and how they could be improved. One remarkable difference in perception centered on recidivism rates in the courts. The judge we interviewed estimated that 70 percent of offenders were recidivists; the attorney gave a figure of 50 percent. The responses of security directors

to the same question produced estimates ranging from two to 10 percent. This difference in estimated proportion of recidivists, if replicated, could provide some insight into the reasons for low prosecution rates.

The open-ended questions for improvements in the handling of shoplifting cases elicited lengthy responses from subjects. The judge who was interviewed, for example, suggested that shoplifters fall into roughly two categories: Chronic offenders who are not deterred by any reasonable court sanctions, and "first offenders," who should be diverted into some form of corrective program and not prosecuted in the court system. The feasibility tests appear to indicate that systematic differences of opinions would emerge between court personnel and retail security personnel. Administration to a larger subject population would allow for statistical analysis of these differences. Numerous concrete suggestions for improvements in the court processing of shoplifting cases would be obtained.

7.3 Results: Court Records

Obtaining useful archival data from the courts is problematic. The court system, itself, maintains some dispositional records. These data, however, are not readily available in summary form, and, if obtained, would only provide gross dispositional distributions without any case or offender-specific information.

The states attorney has access to archival offender records maintained by the state. This information is presented to the judge for sentencing or determination of bond, and is not maintained for evaluation of the court per se, nor is an archival evaluation of states attorney records likely to be useful in a Phase II evaluation. Three factors lead

to this conclusion. First, many pertinent dispositional variables (e.g., plea bargain, presence of counsel) are not included in the offender records. Second, access to states attorneys' files containing shoplifting information would involve literally sorting through thousands of offender histories with only small amounts of useful information in each. Finally serious invasion of privacy issues would need to be addressed. In sum, neither court-maintained nor states attorney-maintained records on the disposition of shoplifting cases are likely to be cost effective archival data bases for a retrospective evaluation of Shoplifting Court.

7.4 Summary and Conclusions

Feasibility tests of court-related data primarily centered on the development and testing of a generic questionnaire which investigated the court processing of shoplifting offenders and the adequacy of the Chicago Shoplifting Court for dealing with shoplifters. Administration of the instrument to members of the court and retail security personnel is likely to illustrate consistent differences between these groups in the perceived efficacy and the appropriate role of the court. All subjects agreed that the shoplifting court practice of group-docketing of shoplifting cases on specific court calls was an improvement over the regular court processing of shoplifting cases. All feasibility test subjects recommended continuation of the special court and adoption of similar courts in other cities.

Specific improvements in questionnaire design and administration have been suggested. In particular, any future assessment procedure should include questioning of court defendants. Because of the inadequacy and problematic availability of archival data from which to evaluate the courts,

a prospective research design with detailed data collection on individual defendants and cases would be suggested.

Chapter 8

Summary

During the last phase of this Phase I assessment, Westinghouse has focused on developing and testing the feasibility of data collection instruments and procedures intended for use in a Phase II assessment or other future research projects in this topic area. This preliminary work is important given the pressing need for further research and evaluation in this topic area. Further research should be conducted because of:

- The serious financial burden placed on American shoppers as a result of the theft problem.
- The widespread use of costly anti-theft strategies.
- The absence of any reliable and valid data concerning either the nature of the theft problem or the effectiveness of anti-theft strategies.

The primary thrust of the feasibility work reported here was to develop and conduct preliminary tests of some new measurement strategies that could be used to assess strategies and improve our understanding of the problem. Without better measures of the extent of the theft problem, the retail community will continue to have a limited ability to assess the impact of anti-theft strategies. Thus, improving the measurement of the theft problem is an important first step and was the central focus of the feasibility study.

After much consideration, it was concluded that the best approach for conducting preliminary research in this area is to use an "intensive

site-specific" approach. This approach calls for feasibility tests at only one or two sites so that the development and refinement of measures and measurement procedures can occur under relatively uniform conditions, allowing for monitoring and immediate feedback.

The following data sources and methodologies were studied during the field feasibility tests:

- Observations of customer behavior.
- Stagings of shoplifting incidents.
- Self-reports by students.
- Shopper interviews.
- Existing retail records.
- Offender process tracing data.
- Court-related data.

The ultimate question that was addressed in the field feasibility tests was whether or not the proposed measures and methodologies (listed above) were practical and useful for future evaluation/research. The feasibility of the measurement plans was assessed primarily in terms of various implementation problems. However, the issues of cost, reliability, and validity were also discussed whenever possible, to aid in the determination of feasibility. The feasibility results are summarized below.

8.1 Measuring the Shoplifting Rate

Establishing factutally-based shoplifting and apprehension rates are crucial to the evaluation of anti-shoplifting strategies. A significant portion of the field feasibility tests was devoted to the development and implementation of an experimental plan designed to establish such rates.

A brief training program was developed and implemented to instruct inexperienced observers. The program consisted of lectures by experts in the fields of retail security, covert surveillance, field observations, and research methodology. In addition simulations were conducted to provide the field staff with surveillance experience.

Implementation of the measurement plan was conducted at a major retail department store in a large metropolitan area. During this phase of the study observers followed randomly assigned shoppers throughout the store to determine the percentage of customers who shoplift. Confederate shoplifters were employed in an attempt to provide a test of store security, as well as the observers ability to detect shoplifting incidents.

The data resulting from the observations and confederate shoplifter reports indicated that the measurement plan is a feasible instrument for further evaluation of the shoplifting problem. However, there were certain qualifications. Most notable of these is the labor and capital intensive nature of the design. Despite these qualifications the measurement plan that developed from this feasibility study should prove to be a valuable tool for further research and evaluation of the shoplifting problem.

Detection rates. The major check on the effectiveness of the field observations involved the calculation of a "detection rate," that is, an estimate of the proportion of actual shopliftings detected by the observers. In order to provide such an estimate, the observation teams were periodically assigned a confederate who would shoplift while in the store. The field staff was successful in identifying between 29 and 54 percent of all staged shoplifting incidents which occurred in their presence. The estimate

depended upon how certain they were that a shoplifting occurred.

Shoplifting rates. One of the principal goals of this phase of the feasibility study was to determine whether field observations were a viable methodology for assessing the magnitude of the shoplifting problem within a given store. One measure of this problem would be the shoplifting rate; that is, the proportion of people who shoplift during their visit to a given store. The field observations provide an estimate of this rate for the cooperating store.

The "most conservative" estimate showed that around three percent of the 223 shoppers were observed engaging in some form of shoplifting. If the more uncertain designations of "highly probable" and "possible" categories are added, the resulting figures are 3.6 and 5.4 percent, respectively. Given the tentative nature of the "possible" category, it might be suggested that the 3.6 percent figure is the most reasonable observed rate. That is, the field staff identified, with some certainty, incidents of shoplifting in 3.6 percent of the customers followed.

Adjusted shoplifting rates. Depending on the estimates, the field staff detected between 29 and 54 percent of the "known incidents." The above figures can be employed to calculate an "adjusted shoplifting rate;" that is, an estimate which takes the unreliability of the observations under consideration. Adjusting for this level of unreliability indicates that the actual shoplifting rate based only on the cases identified as "certain" may have been as high as 9.2 percent. Similarly, if those cases identified as "highly probable" are included, the adjusted shoplifting rate would be 7.8 percent. As was discussed above, this figure represents what

may be terms the most reasonable estimate. That is, given the appropriate level of caution, it may be estimated that approximately 7.8 percent of the customers entering the store shoplifted during their visit.

In sum, the development and implementation of this new observational methodology must be considered a qualified success. Small-scale implementation has shown that the numerous tactical complications inherent in staging such a study can be successfully dealt with. On the other hand, the low detection rate of staged shoplifting s, and the small total population of subjects did not allow substantial assessment of the collected data. Clearly, more work is needed in the area before the methodology can be conclusively qualified as successful and pragmatic.

8.2 Utilization of Existing Retail Records

The feasibility of employing existing retail records for social scientific purposes was examined. Inventory shrinkage figures were obtained from two retailers and were analyzed previously, but an incomplete design, and the composite nature of such figures precluded any firm conclusions about the impact of the selected programs. In addition, apprehension data were also obtained, however, one set of data contained only summary figures for four data points while crucial data had been deleted from the other. In general, these are problems which are typical of attempts to analyze existing data, but are magnified in this area. A useful approach to study of this topic would appear to be in the area of developing standardized means of collecting data which may serve both business and scientific needs. In this sense retailers and social scientists must work closely to develop and improve both data collection and analysis techniques.

CONTINUED

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8.3 Shoplifting and Employee Theft Questionnaires

Two self-report questionnaires were developed--one designed to measure shoplifting behavior among high school students and the other designed to measure theft behavior among retail employees. Each instrument was administered to nine respondents to test its feasibility for future research and evaluation. Overall, the feasibility tests suggest that the self-report instruments are workable and may be advantageous for future work if certain modifications are introduced.

The student shoplifting questionnaire was not only constructed to measure a variety of shoplifting behaviors, but also to address a number of causal factors that may either facilitate or inhibit the act of shoplifting. Emphasis was given to students' thought processes as they affect the decision to shoplift or not. The feasibility results indicate that students had little difficulty understanding or answering the questions. Several recommendations were made concerning modifications in item wording, but no major revisions are considered necessary.

Both the shoplifting and employee theft instruments have relatively unknown reliability and validity. In general, self-report data should be cautiously interpreted because respondents often misremember events, fail to know the real reasons for their behavior, and sometimes give biased or false answers to produce a positive, socially desirable self-presentation.

The employee theft questionnaire goes beyond previous research by offering a wider variety of theft questions including variations in the amount of theft, as well as variations in the type of thefts. Unlike the shoplifting instrument, the questions are restricted to measuring the extent and type of employee theft and do not extend into the hypothesized correlates

of theft (with the exception of demographic data). The feasibility results were generally encouraging. Employee respondents were able to answer most questions without any difficulty.

Finally, it should be noted that the employee theft questionnaire could be relatively expensive to administer and may face opposition from certain groups. For example, the procedures required to ensure a high return rate with a mail questionnaire and a representative sample can be costly. In addition, employee unions may be opposed to such investigations. Nonetheless, these potential obstacles have been successfully dealt with in past research.

8.4 Customer Interviews

A brief interview was designed to assess shoppers' awareness of anti-shoplifting techniques and devices utilized in a retail store. In addition, an attempt was made to determine how easy shoppers thought it was to shoplift and how many shoplifters got caught. This pilot interview was conducted with nine randomly selected respondents. The interviews were generally successful in that all respondents completed the interviews without breaking off. However, two problems were noted. First, too many of the questions resulted in the respondents answering "don't know," which appeared to lower their interest in the interview. Secondly, some respondents were concerned that the interviewer was accusing them of shoplifting. We see these as relatively minor problems which could be resolved in future interviews. We also conclude that shopper perceptions can easily be tapped in interviews like the one utilized.

8.5 Offender Process Tracing

Interviews with apprehended shoplifters. Apprehended shoplifters were requested to retrace their steps through the store and talk aloud about what they saw, thought about, and did. Because of low rates of apprehension, only two shoplifters were contacted in two days. Minimal cooperation was obtained from both of these subjects.

This approach would only be practical if a high rate of apprehension existed in a store or if several nearby stores were cooperating with an interviewer who could go wherever there were apprehensions. In addition, subjects will probably only cooperate if given some advantage as a result, such as guarantee of no prosecution. This produces attendant ethical questions, but they are probably resolvable. There is no way to guarantee truthful reports in this situation, where the subject is concerned about the consequences of illegal acts. It may be impossible to get truthful reports except in unusual instances. In all, this method is difficult, time consuming, and unlikely to yield results worth the effort.

Interviews with experts and nonshoplifters. Expert shoplifters (self-report of six or more incidents in past year) and nonshoplifters were asked to walk through a store on a typical shopping trip. One-half of each type were asked to formulate an intention to shoplift before entering the store.

Statements about shoplifting suggest an orderly process of interest in an item, a decision for some persons not to pay an unfair price, an evaluation of shoplifting strategies, a check on store personnel nearby, and a final decision to shoplift. Nonshoplifters seem to be motivated not to

shoplift because they will be seen and embarrassed, and their socialization regarding moral beliefs about theft. Experienced shoplifters appear to be more strategic, with store personnel the most obvious deterrent, along with the ease of physically removing the item.

The insights illustrated in this pilot data strongly suggest that this method is feasible, and capable of producing new and useful data regarding shoplifter thoughts and behaviors. A study with a larger number of subjects, inclusion of a broad variety of shoplifters solicited in a variety of ways (including from the store files or court records), and a broad and systematic sample of stores would seem to be a worthwhile possibility for increasing our understanding of shoplifting and capacity to control it.

8.6 Evaluation of Shoplifting Court

Feasibility tests of court-related data primarily centered on the development and testing of a generic questionnaire which investigated the court processing of shoplifting offenders and the adequacy of the Chicago Shoplifting Court for dealing with shoplifters. Administration of the instrument to a larger number of court and retail security personnel is likely to illustrate consistent differences between these groups in the perceived efficacy and the appropriate role of the court. All subjects agreed that the Shoplifting Court was an improvement over the regular court processing of shoplifting cases. All feasibility test subjects recommended continuation of the special court and adoption of similar courts in other cities.

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APPENDIX A

FIELD STAFF TRAINING PROGRAM

Field Staff Training Program

In compliance with the proposed measurement design a training course was developed and implemented. The training course consisted of six hours of formal class room presentations; two hours of simulated surveillance exercises; and approximately four hours of debriefing, feedback, and discussion sessions. The formal classroom training consisted of the following:

- Introductory and background lecture.
- A presentation by two retail security directors covering shoplifting techniques.
- A presentation by a special agent of the FBI concerning covert foot surveillance.
- A lecture by a social scientist on data collection and note-taking in the field.
- A movie illustrating shoplifting techniques.
- A summary lecture reviewing pertinent topics and relating them to the observational methodology.

Each of these is discussed in turn.

Introductory lecture. The introductory lecture provided a cursory outline of the experimental design and implementation process of the observational methodology. The role and obligations of the observers was also reviewed. The lecture was presented by a consultant to the Westinghouse Evaluation Institute.

Retail security directors. The two retail security directors were from a large chain of retail department stores in a major metropolitan area. Both directors had extensive knowledge and background in the field of retail security.

The two security directors presented a 25-minute lecture and demonstration. This was followed by a 15-minute question and answer period. The entire presentation revolved around a basic premise: Every person entering a store is a potential shoplifter. This theme was repeated throughout the presentation, as well as the question and answer period that followed. The students were told repeatedly not to judge the customers (subjects) by their appearance, manners, or dress.

In addition to this warning, various shoplifting techniques were demonstrated and discussed. These included "crotch-boosting" (which was demonstrated), "palming," using booster devices such as "booster-bloomers," "booster-hooks," and "booster boxes" (which was demonstrated).

Finally, some "tips" for spotting shoplifters were also cited. These included to watch hands and eyes. (The eyes will move but the head will not,

while the hands steal the merchandise); loose fitting or oversized clothing (the extra bulk may be used to conceal merchandise); close conversation (it is often the mark of corroborative shoplifters); aimless walking (it may be a potential shoplifter checking for merchandise, sales personnel, or opportunities); people moving into blind spots or areas where they cannot easily be seen (they may be in these areas to use the privacy to conceal merchandise).

The question and answer period which followed the presentation consisted, for the most part, of topics irrelevant to the actual intended topic of the training session. The questions dealt primarily with processing of apprehended suspects, shrinkage rates, apprehension rates, and problems involved in store apprehensions.

Special agent of the FBI. A special agent of the FBI presented a 40-minute program oriented toward conducting covert surveillance. While the majority of the presentation was confined to foot surveillance, by either teams or single observers, he also touched on a variety of related subjects. These subjects included mobile surveillance by auto, electronic surveillance aids, preparation for surveillance, and some general tips. The verbal presentation was accompanied by a slide show of 54 color slides.

A number of topics in the presentation proved relevant to the feasibility study:

- Clothing. The observers should dress in a manner that allows them to be unobtrusive and to blend with the surroundings. The observers should not wear clothes that make them stand out from those people around them.
- Identification. Always carry proper forms of identification in case of emergency.
- Area of surveillance. Have all needed materials ready in advance of the time of surveillance, i.e., tape recorders, notebooks, credit cards, disguises, etc.
- Signals. Work out hand signals in advance of surveillance.
- Note taking. Use natural opportunities to take notes while the subject is involved with something or while the surveillance partner is closest to the subject.
- Team surveillance. Work in teams of two or more when possible. This allows for changing tails in an attempt to remain undetected by the subject.

Social scientist. A faculty member of the Northwestern University Medical School presented a lecture on field observations and data transcription methods. The talk was targeted at providing the field staff with a general background in the topic areas and to provide them with a number of possible alternative methods of data collection.

By way of introduction, the need for systematic data collection was stressed, since systematic collection allows for comparisons.

The theoretical social roles for field work was then covered. This continuum moves from the participant as complete observer to complete participant. This scale also corresponds to varying levels of subjectivity, ranging from a position of complete objectivity (complete observer) to the position of complete subjectivity (complete participant). This served as an illustration of the need for field workers to maintain as objective a position as possible when collecting data in the field.

Complete objectivity, however, is impossible. The design of the study, as well as the training of the observer (i.e., sociology, psychology, anthropology) ensure inherent biases. It was suggested that all observers approach their work in such a way that all "givens" be looked at as problematic in nature. It was stressed that "nothing is to be taken for granted."

It was also stressed that there is no "set" method of observational data collection. Every method must ultimately remain dynamic: Subject to change and transformation as the situation or design demands.

The second half of the presentation covered means of data transcription. The four cited methods include recording, detailed notes, short notes, and memory. The positive and negative aspects of each method were discussed. It was concluded that short notes, "flags," taken during the observation and written up in a final form at a later time may be the most pragmatic and unobtrusive method of transcription. However, this method is dependent upon the development of recall skills.

The presentation concluded with a review for constructing the final product of field notes.

Instructional film. A 16-minute training film, entitled, "Sticky Fingers," was shown to the class. The film, supplied by a local retail merchant's security director, is commonly used to assist in the training of store security and sales personnel.

The training film showed examples of common techniques used by shoplifters. The techniques reviewed included the use of booster devices, such as "booster bloomers," "booster boxes," "booster bags," "booster coats," and "booster belts." Also reviewed were palming techniques, ways to distract sales personnel, "crotch boosting," concealing garments while in fitting rooms, and price-tag switching.

The training movie also demonstrated the application of closed-circuit television and electronic article surveillance technology in combating shoplifting.

Finally, the film stressed that every customer is a potential shoplifter and that the best deterrent to shoplifting is through the application of good basic sales practices.

Summary lecture. A member of the Westinghouse Evaluation Institute staff presented a discussion of the data transcription techniques considered for the study, background information on recent findings on shoplifting and employee theft, problems in measuring employee theft and shoplifting, background on the experimental design for the feasibility study, and some experiences in observing shoplifting.

Simulated surveillance exercise. The training session consisted of a practice drill designed to provide the student observers with experience in covert surveillance. This was followed by a general discussion of suggestions to make the surveillance easier, less obvious, and resolve problems the students encountered in the practice session. The class was divided in half, according to the divisions already arranged for daily attendance in the feasibility study. The individual students were paired with partners to form observation teams. These teams are also the arrangement intended for use in the field work and the partners assigned were, in most cases, the teams to be used in the study. The observation teams were then discretely assigned to a subject whom they were instructed to follow, as discretely as possible, and to note their behavior. The students acting as subjects were instructed to walk across campus to the student center, and then to meet at the entrance to the building. When the time period for the observations had transpired, the students all met at the student center entrance. At that time, their roles were reversed: The subjects were assigned to observation teams and the observers became the subjects. An identical observation procedure was conducted after which the students returned to the classroom. The same procedure was then conducted by the second half of the class.

In addition to the field exercise, topics were discussed that were directly applicable to the observations. The topics included self-confidence on the part of the observer; signals as a means of nonverbal communication for observation teams; cover stories, dressing to blend into the crowd; procedures for dressing rooms, elevators, washrooms, and losing subjects; note-taking; and ethical responsibilities. The discussion was augmented by class discussion of the problems they encountered in the practice exercise.

In addition to the formal training, the field activities of the staff were monitored while conducting observations. This provided a source of continual feedback to the staff that was oriented toward solving tactical problems relative to specific observers. During the implementation of the feasibility study, one hour each week was also spent debriefing the field staff, discussion various problems, and formulating potential solutions to these complications. In total, the training process consisted of approximately 12 hours of formal and informal instruction.

The combination of specific instruction and weekly debriefings created a dynamic interplay between the field staff and supervisory personnel that effected implementation of the study. The feedback from observers assisted in tailoring and refining the procedural and tactical aspects of the study. As a result of this dynamic interplay, modifications were instituted which improved a number of aspects of the observational methodology.

APPENDIX B

FIELD OBSERVER'S DATA SCHEDULE

Observer Field Notes
SET Feasibility Study

Name: _____

Team Number: _____

Observation Date: _____

Time Subject Entered Store: _____

Time Subject Exited Store: _____

Subject Number: _____

A. General Demographics

1. Sex: _____
2. Age: _____
3. Race: _____
4. Shopping alone/in pair/in group: _____
5. Dress: _____
6. Outstanding characteristics: _____

B. Movement Through Store

Floor	Department	Time in Dept.	Merchandise Handled	$ Value

Observer Field Notes
SET Feasibility Study
Page 2

C. Subject Behaviors

1. Hand movements: _____
2. Head movements: _____
3. Interaction with sales personnel: _____
4. Interaction with shopping partner: _____
5. Shopliftings:
   a. Witnessed concealment and exit from store (explain): _____
   b. Possible shoplifting. No visual verification of concealment (explain).
   c. No shoplifting (explain): _____
6. Outstanding behavior: _____

D. Observer's Impressions: General review of notable characteristics, behaviors, and observations of interest. Any unique insights concerning the subjects surveilled.

APPENDIX C

CONFEDERATE DATA SCHEDULE

Confederate Field Notes
SET Feasibility Study

Name: _____

Date: _____

Time Entered Store: _____

Time Exited Store: _____

A. General Demographics

1. Sex: _____
2. Age: _____
3. Race: _____
4. Shopping alone/in pair/in group: _____
5. Dress: _____

B. Movement Through Store

Floor	Department	Time in Dept.	Merchandise Handled	$ Value

C. Confederate Behaviors

1. Hand movements: _____
2. Head movements: _____

Confederate Field Notes
SET Feasibility Study
Page 2

3. Interaction with sales personnel: _____

_____

4. Interaction with shopping partner: _____

_____

5. Shoplifting.

a. Merchandise shoplifted: _____

_____

b. Dollar value of merchandise: _____

c. Method of concealment: _____

_____

d. Particular problems: _____

_____

_____

D. Impressions: General review of notable occurrences, behaviors, etc.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX D

LIST OF MERCHANDISE SHOPLIFTED BY CONFEDERATES

What follows is a complete listing of all merchandise shoplifted by our confederates during the implementation phase of the feasibility study. The merchandise is ranked according to its retail dollar value from least expensive to most expensive.

Item	Price	Quantity
Miracle-Gro Plant Food	$ 1.89	1
Stuffed Animal	3.00	1
Mittens	3.59	1 pair
Picture Frame	4.50	1
Picture and Frame	5.75	1
Mittens	5.99	1 pair
Curtain Ties	6.85	1 set
Doll	7.25	1
Men's Tie	7.50	1
Sport Shorts	8.00	1
Men's Gloves	9.99	1 pair
Trip Book	11.50	1
Crystal Ball	12.95	1
Men's Belt	13.00	1
Teddy Bear	13.00	1
Women's Gloves	14.99	1 pair
14 Kt. Gold Necklace & Earring Set	15.99	2 sets
Sport Shorts	16.00	1
Letter Opener	16.00	1
Figurine	21.95	1
Skirt	22.00	1

Item	Price	Quantity
Women's Belt	$23.00	1
Procelain Bottle	25.00	1
Men's Wallet	26.00	1
Skirt & Blouse	28.00	1
Framed Painting	29.99	1
Backgammon Set	30.00	1
Satin Sheet	40.00	1
Framed Oil Painting	44.00	1
Purse	49.99	1
Dress	58.00	1
Wooden Bird w/Gold Head & Feet	100.00	1
Black & White Sony T.V.	179.99	1
Hand Painted, Porcelain Doll	285.00	1

APPENDIX E

STUDENT SHOPLIFTING QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is concerned with your experiences as a shopper in stores. Specifically, we are interested in what information people use in deciding whether or not to shoplift. Your responses are completely anonymous and cannot be used against you in any way. Do not put your name on this questionnaire. Please answer the questions as accurately as possible.

First, we would like to ask a few questions about your background. Please mark an X in the appropriate blank.

1. What is your sex?

   _____Male _____Female

2. What is your racial-ethnic background?

   _____American Indian _____Latino

   _____Asian _____White

   _____Black _____Other _____
   (Please specify)

3. What is your religion?

   _____Catholic _____Protestant _____Buddhist

   _____Moslem _____Jewish _____Atheist

   _____Other _____
   (Please specify)

4. What is your age (as of your last birthday)?

   _____Years

5. What is the highest grade or year of school that you have completed?

   _____

6. What are your parent's occupations?

   _____Father's job

   _____Mother's job

Now we would like to ask a few questions regarding your shopping experiences. For each question, please mark an X in the appropriate blanks.

8. While shopping, have you ever thought about taking an item without paying--but you did not take it?

_____yes no_____

If yes, please answer a, b, c, and d.

a. Why did you consider not paying for the item? (Please mark an X in the appropriate blanks).

_____Lack of money
_____Excitement/Thrill
_____Peer pressure
_____Impulse
_____Resell items for money
_____Disgusted with store personnel
_____Poor service
_____Disgusted with increasing prices
_____Easy to do
_____Little risk of being caught
_____Little risk of being penalized
_____Other_____
_____
_____
(Please specify)

b. Go back to a and place a second X by those reasons that you consider to be very important.

c. Why did you decide not to take the item without paying?

_____Risk of being caught
_____Possible penalties
_____Other shoppers were around
_____Store personnel were around
_____Conscience/guilt
_____Too self-conscious
_____Parental pressure against shoplifting
_____Item was too difficult to take
_____Peer pressure against shoplifting
_____Decided that I really didn't need the item
_____Decided that I really want the item
_____Noticed store devices to detect shoplifting
_____Item was too difficult to conceal
_____Other_____
_____
_____
(Please specify)

d. Go back to c and mark a second X by those reasons that you consider to be very important.

9. There are many things that discourage people from taking items without paying. Which of the following actions or devices do you think discourage yourself from potentially shoplifting? (Please mark an X in the appropriate blanks).

_____Providing good customer service
_____Maintaining reasonable prices
_____Having many store personnel visible
_____Anti-shoplifting posters
_____Use of concave mirrors
_____Checking items taken into dressing rooms
_____Risk of being caught
_____Risk of being prosecuted
_____Risk of being convicted
_____Use of one-way mirrors
_____Use of videotape cameras
_____Sensitized tags on items (which set off alarms)
_____Searching belongings or person
_____Making items hard to remove
_____Making items awkward to conceal
_____Anti-shoplifting campaigns
_____Reading or hearing about other's bad experiences with shoplifting
_____Other_____
_____
_____
(Please specify)

10. Please go back to question 9 and place a second X by those factors that you consider to be very important.

Now we would like to ask several questions regarding any past or present shoplifting experiences. If you have never shoplifted, please answer only the next question and return the questionnaire.

11. Have you ever shoplifted? (Please mark X in the appropriate space.)

_____Yes _____No (If no, please return the questionnaire. Do not answer the remaining questions.)

12. About how many times have you shoplifted?

_____times

13. About how many times have you shoplifted within the past year (March 1979-March 1980)?

____times

14. What types of items have you usually taken while shoplifting?

____Major clothing
____Minor clothing
____Accessories (e.g.,socks, belts, underwear)
____Automotive supplies
____Music supplies
____Food
____Minor "necessities" (e.g., tools)
____Major "necessities" (e.g., radio)
____Sporting goods
____School supplies
____Other_____

_____
(Please specify)

15. On the average, how many items have you taken <u>each</u> time you shoplifted?

____items

16. What have been your major reason(s) for shoplifting? (Please mark an X in the appropriate spaces.)

____Lack of money
____Excitement/Thrill
____Peer pressure
____Impulse
____Resell items for money
____Poor service
____Disgusted with store personnel
____Disgusted with increasing prices
____Easy to do
____Little risk of being caught
____Little risk of being penalized
____Other_____

_____
_____
(Please specify)

17. Go back up to question #16 and place a second X by those reasons that you consider to be very important.

Now we would like to ask a few questions about your <u>most recent</u> shoplifting incident. We would like to trace your actions throughout the incident, so please try to think back to the incident and recall what you did and what you thought about.

18. When did your most recent shoplifting incident take place?

____Past week
____Past month
____Past six months
____1 year ago
____2 years ago
____3 years ago
____4 or more years ago

19. What type of store have you shoplifted in the most. (Check one in each column.)

____Small stores
____Medium-size stores
____Large stores
____Food
____Drug
____Department
____Other_____
(Please specify)

20. At times when you have shoplifted did you intend to do so before you entered the store?

____Yes ____No

If yes, please answer <u>a</u>

a. If you plan to shoplift before entering the store, do you usually plan which items to take?

____I had no idea which items to take, but figured that I would probably take items that "caught my eye."

____I chose some items that I intended to shoplift, but figured that there were other items I would take while in the store.

____I chose the specific items that I intended to shoplift.

____Other_____

_____
(Please specify)

21. What is the average cost of items you have shoplifted?

____less than $1.

____$1 to $5.

____$6 to $10.

____$11 to $20.

____$21 or more.

22. Specifically, which of the following concerns did you think about while shoplifting? Please mark an X in any blank that applies.

____Value of the item

____Cost of the item

____How much you wanted the item

____How easy/hard it is to take item

____How much money you have

____Store's policy towards shoplifting

____Risk of being caught

____Penalties if you get caught

____Parental pressure against shoplifting

____Presence of videotape cameras

____Use of sensitized tags on items

____Peer pressure against shoplifting

____How easy/hard to conceal the item

____Other persons shoplifting experiences or methods

____Possible search of bags or self

____Presence of other people

____Presence of store personnel

____Presence of security guard

____Presence of concave mirrors

____Presence of one-way mirrors

____Other_____

_____
(Please specify)

23. Please go back to question #22 and place a second X by those factors that you consider to be very important.

24. What percentage of your friends or classmates do you believe shoplift from stores? (check one)

____0%

____1% to 10%

____11% to 20%

____21% to 30%

____31% to 40%

____41% to 50%

____51% to 60%

____61% to 70%

____71% to 80%

____81% to 90%

____91% to 100%

25. Do your friends or classmates take things from stores? (check one)

____most of the time

____some of the time

____almost never

____never

26. Have any of your friends or classmates ever been caught shoplifting?

____yes ____no

27. Have any of your friends or classmates ever been arrested for shoplifting?

____yes ____no

28. Have you ever been caught shoplifting?

____yes ____no

29. Have you ever been arrested for shoplifting?

____yes ____no

30. What do you think happens to people your age who get caught shoplifting? (check one)

____warned and then released

____released to custody of your parents

____police are called, you are arrested and sent to court, not convicted.

____convicted and fined.

____convicted and sent to juvenile reform school

____convicted and sent to jail

Thank you very much for your cooperation. Again, we wish to remind you that your answers are completely anonymous and can not in any way, be used against you.

APPENDIX F

EMPLOYEE THEFT QUESTIONNAIRE

This questionnaire is part of a research project on employee work activities in retail stores. This project is being conducted by a private research firm rather than any particular retail store or retail organization.

The purpose of this research is to find out more about the ways that retail stores benefit from and lose from their employees. On the one hand, it has been said that employees do many things beyond what is expected of them to help their employer, including everything from taking a short lunch break to helping out a new employee. On the other hand, it is believed that employees often take merchandise without paying for it or take cash without authorization. Today, it is estimated that more than 50% of all employees have taken some cash or merchandise from the store. Without a doubt, these practices are very popular among employees.

The problem is that no one knows for sure how often or how much of this happens nor does anyone know how often stores benefit from employee activities. This questionnaire is meant to answer these questions and get at both sides of the picture.

Some of the questions are sensitive topics, but you can be assured that your answers are completely confidential and cannot be used against you in any way. Federal law protects your identity. You should not put your name or address anywhere on this questionnaire. With this protection, you should feel free to give honest answers. Any research project is useless if it contains false information.

Please answer the following questions as accurately as possible. Place an X in the box which matches your answer. If you check "YES," please estimate the number of times you have engaged in that activity during the past year by placing a number in the far right box. If a question does not apply to you (e.g., cash register questions do not apply to employees who work in the stockroom), then mark N/A next to the question.

EXAMPLE

	NO	YES	If YES, HOW MANY TIMES?
A. Have you ever refused to help a customer because he or she was being "picky" or rude?	☐	☒	3

The above answer indicates that you have refused to help a customer on three occasions over the past year. If you had answered "NO," the third box on the right would remain blank.

In the past year...	NO	YES	If YES, HOW MANY TIMES?
1. Have you ever helped to train a new employee?	☐	☐	☐
2. Have you ever come to work when you felt ill and wanted to stay home?	☐	☐	☐
3. Have you ever borrowed money from the cash register without authorization?	☐	☐	☐
4. Have you ever taken merchandise worth 5 dollars or less without paying for it?	☐	☐	☐
5. Have you ever spent some of your own money on business expenses?	☐	☐	☐
6. Have you ever taken 5 dollars or less from the cash register without authorization?	☐	☐	☐
7. Have you ever taken a short lunch to help out on a busy day?	☐	☐	☐
8. Have you ever taken merchandise worth 6-20 dollars without paying for it?	☐	☐	☐

	NO	YES	If YES, HOW MANY TIMES?
9. Have you ever not taken a break so that one of your coworkers could have a break?	☐	☐	☐
10. Have you ever taken 6-20 dollars from the cash register without authorization?	☐	☐	☐
11. Have you ever tolerated an excessively rude customer?	☐	☐	☐
12. Have you ever given merchandise to a friend or family member without charge?	☐	☐	☐
13. Have you ever done extra work to make up for a lazy coworker?	☐	☐	☐
14. Have you ever underrung merchandise for a friend or family member?	☐	☐	☐
15. Have you ever spent part of your lunch time or break doing "housekeeping" in your section?	☐	☐	☐
16. Have you ever used your discount privilege to buy things for a friend, familiy member, or other employee?	☐	☐	☐
17. Have you ever gone out of your way to help a customer or coworker above and beyond what is expected of you?	☐	☐	☐
18. Have you ever damaged merchandise in order to obtain a markdown?	☐	☐	☐
19. Have you ever gone out of your way to help your supervisor above and beyond what is expected of you?	☐	☐	☐
20. Have you ever taken merchandise worth more than 20 dollars without paying for it?	☐	☐	☐
21. Have you ever taken more than 20 dollars from the cash register without authorization?	☐	☐	☐

	NO	YES	If YES, How Many Times?
22. Have you ever reported a customer for attempting to take store merchandise without paying for it?			
23. Have you ever overcharged a customer and kept the extra?			
24. Have you ever said positive things about the store to customers?			
25. Have you ever short-changed a customer and kept the remainder?			
26. Have you ever dressed up to please customers?			
27. Have you ever rung up less than the price of an item and kept the extra?			
28. Have you ever worked a little extra time without extra pay?			
29. Have you ever falsified a cash refund?			

The next few questions concern other employees.

30. Not counting yourself, do you know anyone who has taken merchandise without paying for it?		
32. Not counting yourself, do you know anyone who has taken maoney from the cash register without authorization?		

31. If YES on #30: how many people do you know who have taken merchandise in the last year? _____ people

33. If YES on #32: how many people do you know who have taken money from the cash register without authorization? _____ people

Finally, we would like to ask you some questions about yourself. These questions will help us to learn how different groups of people feel about their work. Please place an X in the appropriate blank.

34. What is your sex?
_____ Female _____ Male

35. For statistical purposes, we would like to know what racial group you belong to.
_____ Black _____ Other (specify) _____
_____ White
_____ Hispanic _____ Refuse

36. What is the highest level of formal education you have completed?
_____ Grade school graduate or less.
_____ Some high school, but no diploma.
_____ High school graduate.
_____ Vocational, technical or industrial school degree.
_____ Community or junior college degree.
_____ Some college, but no degree.
_____ College graduate.
_____ Some graduate school, but no advanced degree.
_____ Graduate or professional degree.

37. Approximately how old are you?

_____ 15-20	_____ 41-45
_____ 21-25	_____ 46-50
_____ 26-30	_____ 51-55
_____ 31-35	_____ 56-60
_____ 36-40	_____ 61-65
	_____ 66 or older

Thank you very much for your cooperation. Again, we wish to remind you that your answers are completely anonymous and can not in any way be used against you.

APPENDIX G

CUSTOMER INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Shopper Interview

Interviewer_____ Date_____

Store_____ Time_____

Excuse me, we are conducting a brief survey of shoppers. We feel it is important to get feedback from store customers about important aspects of store operation. I just have a few questions to ask you. It will take just a few minutes.

1. How often do you shop in this store? _____
2. About how much time do you spend in the store when you shop (in minutes)_____

I am going to ask you some questions which may require you to provide an answer from this card (hand card). This card illustrates the answers which range from extremely to not at all. If you don't know or can't give an answer, please tell me.

3. How pleasant is it to shop in this store?

Extremely____ Moderately____ A Little____ Not at All____ Don't Know____

4. Do you have a store charge card? Yes____ No____

I now would like to ask your opinion about store security.

5. How severe a problem do you think shoplifting is in this store?

Extremely____ Moderately____ A Little____ Not at All____ Don't Know____

6. How easy do you think it is to shoplift in this store?

Extremely____ Moderately____ A Little____ Not at All____ Don't Know____

7. How much more difficulty does store security make it to shop in this store?

Extremely____ Moderately____ A Little____ Not at All____ Don't Know____

8. Of 100 people who enter this store, how many do you think shoplift while here? _____

9. Do you think there is too much security, the right amount, or too little security in this store? (Circle answer.)

10. Of 100 people who shoplift in this store, how many do you think get caught? _____

11. How good a job do you think store security does in dealing with shoplifting?

Extremely____ Moderately____ A Little____ Not at All____ Don't Know____

12. I am going to name some security measures that a store might use. I would like you to tell me whether you have seen them in this store by answering YES if you have noticed them and NO if you have not. If you don't know what the device is, please ask me to clarify.

	Yes	No
Uniformed security	___	___
Plainclothes security	___	___
Concave mirrors	___	___
Anti-shoplifting posters	___	___
Checking of item taken into dressing room	___	___
One-way mirrors	___	___
TV cameras	___	___
Tags on items which set off alarms	___	___
Location of sensors	___	___

Are there any other comments that you would like to make conberning store security or shoplifting?

Thank you for your cooperation.

By Observation

Sex M___ F___

Race American Indian___ Black___ Other___
Asian___ Latino___

Age: 21-30___ 51-60___
31-40___ 61-70___
41-50___

APPENDIX H

SHOPLIFTING COURT QUESTIONNAIRE

SHOPLIFTING COURT QUESTIONNAIRE

Date _____

Respondent _____ Position _____

Telephone # _____

Interviewer _____

Introduction

Hello. This is (interviewer) from the Westinghouse Evaluation Institute in Evanston. We are conducting a national assessment of shoplifting and employee theft programs. The research project is sponsored by the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. The shoplifting court in Chicago is of special interest to this project. As a (position), we are particularly interested in your opinions, and I was wondering if I might have about five minutes of your time to ask you some questions about it?

NO.....I'd be happy to call you back (come back) at some other time if it would be more convenience for you. We are very interested in your opinions.

MAYBE..Is there a particular time that I can call you back (come back) when it would be most convenient for you?

- - - - - - - - - -

YES....

1. First, I'd like to ask you a few questions about the handling of shoplifters in the courts. Do you think that court decisions...
   1. almost never deter shoplifting?
   2. occasionally deter shoplifting?
   3. frequently deter shoplifting?
   4. almost always deter shoplifting?
   5. not sure.
2. What about individual shoplifters who have been caught and convicted? Do you think that court decisions...
   1. almost always deter them from further shoplifting?
   2. occasionally deter them from further shoplifting?
   3. frequently deter them from further shoplifting?
   4. almost always deter them from further shoplifting?
   5. Not sure.
3. In your opinion, are court decisions in shoplifting cases too lenient, about right, or too severe?
   1. too lenient
   2. about right
   3. too severe
4. Do you think that more severe sentences in the courts would greatly reduce shoplifting?
   1. yes
   2. no
   3. not sure
5. Roughly what percentage of defendants in shoplifting cases would you say are repeat offenders?

   _____%
6. Shoplifting is a complex problem and people may shoplift for different reasons. What do you think causes people to shoplift?

   _____

   _____

   _____

7. On a philosophical level, there are several different goals for dealing with shoplifters. For example, we could attempt to punish shoplifters; we could attempt to rehabilitate them, or we could penalize convincted shoplifters in order to deter others from shoplifting. How important do you consider each of these three alternatives for solving the shoplifting problem?

	Not important at all	Of little importance	Neutral	Of some importance	Very important
a. What about punishment? Is it...	1	2	3	4	5
b. What about rehabilitation? Is it...	1	2	3	4	5
c. What about penalizing them to deter others? Is it...	1	2	3	4	5

8. When we take a closer look at court decisions, we see that courts can give shoplifters fines, send them to jail, put them on probation, or give them a conditional discharge. How useful do you think each of these alternatives are for deterring shoplifters?

	Not useful at all	Of little use	Neutral	Of some use	Very useful
a. What about monetary fines?	1	2	3	4	5
b. What about jail sentences?	1	2	3	4	5
c. What about probation?	1	2	3	4	5
d. What about conditional discharge?	1	2	3	4	5
e. What about supervision?	1	2	3	4	5

9. Now I have a few questions which specifically deal with the shoplifting court in Chicago. To your knowledge, has the shoplifting court program...
   1. increased the percentage of shoplifting cases brought to court?
   2. Decreased the percentage of shoplifting cases brought to court?
   3. Had no effect on the shoplifting cases brought to court?
   4. Not sure.

10. In your opinion, has the shoplifting court program increased the percentage of guilty verdicts in shoplifting?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Not sure.

11. Do you think it has resulted in increased penalties for convincted shoplifters?
   1. Yes.
   2. No
   3. Not sure.

12. Do you think it has reduced the cost of prosecuting shoplifters?
   1. Yes
   2. No
   3. Not sure.

13. Do you think the shoplifting court is a significant improvement over the regular manner of processing shoplifting cases?

   Yes--How? _____

   No---Why Not? _____

   Not sure.

NOTE: The following five questions apply to retail security only. If you are not interviewing a retail security person, please go immediately to question 19.

14. Can you tell me roughly how many cases per month your company prosecutes in shoplifting court? _____

15. About what percentage of these cases result in guilty verdicts?

_____%

16. On the average, how many shoplifters are apprehended in your company per month? _____

17. Has the shoplifting court program made it easier for your company to prosecute shoplifters?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure/no records
4. d/n/a

18. Has the shoplifting court significantly increased the number of cases your company is able to prosecute?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure
4. d/n/a

19. Do you think the shoplifting court program should be continued in Chicago?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure.

20. Would you recommend the adoption of similar programs in other cities?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not sure

21. As you know, one of the objectives of the shoplifting court program has been to make it easire for retailers to bring their cases to court. It appears that a large number of cases are still being terminated for lack of a complaining witness. In your opinion, why are a large number of cases still being terminated for lack of a complaining witness?

_____

_____

22. Do you have any suggestions for increasing the prosecution rate?

_____

_____

23. Do you have any specific recommendations for the improvement of shoplifting court or the court processing of shoplifting cases?

_____

_____

24. Do you have any further comments about the shoplifting court?

_____

_____

_____

25. Finally, do you have any comments or suggestions about the questions I have asked you? At this point we are testing the questions and they are open to revision.

_____

_____

_____

Thank you very much for your time. We appreciate your helping us with our study.